**MAJ 402. MODERN ENGLISH LITERATURE**

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**Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806 - 1861). “The Cry of the Children”**

"Theu theu, ti prosderkesthe m ommasin, tekna;"

[Alas, alas, why do you gaze at me with your eyes, my children.]--Medea.

1 Do ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers,

2 Ere the sorrow comes with years ?

3 They are leaning their young heads against their mothers, --

4 And that cannot stop their tears.

5 The young lambs are bleating in the meadows ;

6 The young birds are chirping in the nest ;

7 The young fawns are playing with the shadows ;

8 The young flowers are blowing toward the west--

9 But the young, young children, O my brothers,

10 They are weeping bitterly !

11 They are weeping in the playtime of the others,

12 In the country of the free.

13 Do you question the young children in the sorrow,

14 Why their tears are falling so ?

15 The old man may weep for his to-morrow

16 Which is lost in Long Ago --

17 The old tree is leafless in the forest --

18 The old year is ending in the frost --

19 The old wound, if stricken, is the sorest --

20 The old hope is hardest to be lost :

21 But the young, young children, O my brothers,

22 Do you ask them why they stand

23 Weeping sore before the bosoms of their mothers,

24 In our happy Fatherland ?

25 They look up with their pale and sunken faces,

26 And their looks are sad to see,

27 For the man's grief abhorrent, draws and presses

28 Down the cheeks of infancy --

29 "Your old earth," they say, "is very dreary;"

30 "Our young feet," they say, "are very weak !"

31 Few paces have we taken, yet are weary--

32 Our grave-rest is very far to seek !

33 Ask the old why they weep, and not the children,

34 For the outside earth is cold --

35 And we young ones stand without, in our bewildering,

36 And the graves are for the old !"

37 "True," say the children, "it may happen

38 That we die before our time !

39 Little Alice died last year her grave is shapen

40 Like a snowball, in the rime.

41 We looked into the pit prepared to take her --

42 Was no room for any work in the close clay :

43 From the sleep wherein she lieth none will wake her,

44 Crying, 'Get up, little Alice ! it is day.'

45 If you listen by that grave, in sun and shower,

46 With your ear down, little Alice never cries ;

47 Could we see her face, be sure we should not know her,

48 For the smile has time for growing in her eyes ,--

49 And merry go her moments, lulled and stilled in

50 The shroud, by the kirk-chime !

51 It is good when it happens," say the children,

52 "That we die before our time !"

53 Alas, the wretched children ! they are seeking

54 Death in life, as best to have !

55 They are binding up their hearts away from breaking,

56 With a cerement from the grave.

57 Go out, children, from the mine and from the city --

58 Sing out, children, as the little thrushes do --

59 Pluck you handfuls of the meadow-cowslips pretty

60 Laugh aloud, to feel your fingers let them through !

61 But they answer, " Are your cowslips of the meadows

62 Like our weeds anear the mine ?

63 Leave us quiet in the dark of the coal-shadows,

64 From your pleasures fair and fine!

65 "For oh," say the children, "we are weary,

66 And we cannot run or leap --

67 If we cared for any meadows, it were merely

68 To drop down in them and sleep.

69 Our knees tremble sorely in the stooping --

70 We fall upon our faces, trying to go ;

71 And, underneath our heavy eyelids drooping,

72 The reddest flower would look as pale as snow.

73 For, all day, we drag our burden tiring,

74 Through the coal-dark, underground --

75 Or, all day, we drive the wheels of iron

76 In the factories, round and round.

77 "For all day, the wheels are droning, turning, --

78 Their wind comes in our faces, --

79 Till our hearts turn, -- our heads, with pulses burning,

80 And the walls turn in their places

81 Turns the sky in the high window blank and reeling --

82 Turns the long light that droppeth down the wall, --

83 Turn the black flies that crawl along the ceiling --

84 All are turning, all the day, and we with all ! --

85 And all day, the iron wheels are droning ;

86 And sometimes we could pray,

87 'O ye wheels,' (breaking out in a mad moaning)

88 'Stop ! be silent for to-day ! ' "

89 Ay ! be silent ! Let them hear each other breathing

90 For a moment, mouth to mouth --

91 Let them touch each other's hands, in a fresh wreathing

92 Of their tender human youth !

93 Let them feel that this cold metallic motion

94 Is not all the life God fashions or reveals --

95 Let them prove their inward souls against the notion

96 That they live in you, or under you, O wheels ! --

97 Still, all day, the iron wheels go onward,

98 As if Fate in each were stark ;

99 And the children's souls, which God is calling sunward,

100 Spin on blindly in the dark.

101 Now tell the poor young children, O my brothers,

102 To look up to Him and pray --

103 So the blessed One, who blesseth all the others,

104 Will bless them another day.

105 They answer, " Who is God that He should hear us,

106 While the rushing of the iron wheels is stirred ?

107 When we sob aloud, the human creatures near us

108 Pass by, hearing not, or answer not a word !

109 And we hear not (for the wheels in their resounding)

110 Strangers speaking at the door :

111 Is it likely God, with angels singing round Him,

112 Hears our weeping any more ?

113 " Two words, indeed, of praying we remember ;

114 And at midnight's hour of harm, --

115 'Our Father,' looking upward in the chamber,

116 We say softly for a charm.

117 We know no other words, except 'Our Father,'

118 And we think that, in some pause of angels' song,

119 God may pluck them with the silence sweet to gather,

120 And hold both within His right hand which is strong.

121 'Our Father !' If He heard us, He would surely

122 (For they call Him good and mild)

123 Answer, smiling down the steep world very purely,

124 'Come and rest with me, my child.'

125 "But, no !" say the children, weeping faster,

126 " He is speechless as a stone ;

127 And they tell us, of His image is the master

128 Who commands us to work on.

129 Go to ! " say the children,--"up in Heaven,

130 Dark, wheel-like, turning clouds are all we find !

131 Do not mock us ; grief has made us unbelieving --

132 We look up for God, but tears have made us blind."

133 Do ye hear the children weeping and disproving,

134 O my brothers, what ye preach ?

135 For God's possible is taught by His world's loving --

136 And the children doubt of each.

137 And well may the children weep before you ;

138 They are weary ere they run ;

139 They have never seen the sunshine, nor the glory

140 Which is brighter than the sun :

141 They know the grief of man, without its wisdom ;

142 They sink in the despair, without its calm --

143 Are slaves, without the liberty in Christdom, --

144 Are martyrs, by the pang without the palm, --

145 Are worn, as if with age, yet unretrievingly

146 No dear remembrance keep,--

147 Are orphans of the earthly love and heavenly :

148 Let them weep ! let them weep !

149 They look up, with their pale and sunken faces,

150 And their look is dread to see,

151 For they think you see their angels in their places,

152 With eyes meant for Deity ;--

153 "How long," they say, "how long, O cruel nation,

154 Will you stand, to move the world, on a child's heart, --

155 Stifle down with a mailed heel its palpitation,

156 And tread onward to your throne amid the mart ?

157 Our blood splashes upward, O our tyrants,

158 And your purple shews your path ;

159 But the child's sob curseth deeper in the silence

160 Than the strong man in his wrath !"

**Jack London. “The Apostate”**

"Now I wake me up to work;

I pray the Lord I may not shirk.

If I should die before the night,

I pray the Lord my work's all right."

Amen.

"If you don't git up, Johnny, I won't give you a bite to eat!"

The threat had no effect on the boy. He clung stubbornly to sleep, fighting for its oblivion as the dreamer fights for his dream. The boy's hands loosely clenched themselves, and he made feeble, spasmodic blows at the air. These blows were intended for his mother, but she betrayed practised familiarity in avoiding them as she shook him roughly by the shoulder. "Lemme 'lone!"

It was a cry that began, muffled, in the deeps of sleep, that swiftly rushed upward, like a wail, into passionate belligerence, and that died away and sank down into an inarticulate whine. It was a bestial cry, as of a soul in torment, filled with infinite protest and pain.

But she did not mind. She was a sad-eyed, tired-faced woman, and she had grown used to this task, which she repeated every day of her life. She got a grip on the bed-clothes and tried to strip them down; but the boy, ceasing his punching, clung to them desperately. In a huddle, at the foot of the bed, he still remained covered. Then she tried dragging the bedding to the floor. The boy opposed her. She braced herself. Hers was the superior weight, and the boy and bedding gave, the former instinctively following the latter in order to shelter against the chill of the room that bit into his body.

As he toppled on the edge of the bed it seemed that he must fall head-first to the floor. But consciousness fluttered up in him. He righted himself and for a moment perilously balanced. Then he struck the floor on his feet. On the instant his mother seized him by the shoulders and shook him. Again his fists struck out, this time with more force and directness. At the same time his eyes opened. She released him. He was awake.

"All right," he mumbled.

She caught up the lamp and hurried out, leaving him in darkness.

"You'll be docked," she warned back to him.

He did not mind the darkness. When he had got into his clothes, he went out into the kitchen. His tread was very heavy for so thin and light a boy. His legs dragged with their own weight, which seemed unreasonable because they were such skinny legs. He drew a broken-bottomed chair to the table.

"Johnny!" his mother called sharply.

He arose as sharply from the chair, and, without a word, went to the sink. It was a greasy, filthy sink. A smell came up from the outlet. He took no notice of it. That a sink should smell was to him part of the natural order, just as it was a part of the natural order that the soap should be grimy with dish-water and hard to lather. Nor did he try very hard to make it lather. Several splashes of the cold water from the running faucet completed the function. He did not wash his teeth. For that matter he had never seen a tooth-brush, nor did he know that there existed beings in the world who were guilty of so great a foolishness as tooth washing.

"You might wash yourself wunst a day without bein' told," his mother complained.

She was holding a broken lid on the pot as she poured two cups of coffee. He made no remark, for this was a standing quarrel between them, and the one thing upon which his mother was hard as adamant. "Wunst" a day it was compulsory that he should wash his face. He dried himself on a greasy towel, damp and dirty and ragged, that left his face covered with shreds of lint.

"I wish we didn't live so far away," she said, as he sat down. "I try to do the best I can. You know that. But a dollar on the rent is such a savin', an' we've more room here. You know that."

He scarcely followed her. He had heard it all before, many times. The range of her thought was limited, and she was ever harking back to the hardship worked upon them by living so far from the mills.

"A dollar means more grub," he remarked sententiously. "I'd sooner do the walkin' an' git the grub."

He ate hurriedly, half chewing the bread and washing the unmasticated chunks down with coffee. The hot and muddy liquid went by the name of coffee. Johnny thought it was coffee -- and excellent coffee. That was one of the few of life's illusions that remained to him. He had never drunk real coffee in his life.

In addition to the bread, there was a small piece of cold pork. His mother refilled his cup with coffee. As he was finishing the bread, he began to watch if more was forthcoming. She intercepted his questioning glance.

"Now, don't be hoggish, Johnny," was her comment. "You've had your share. Your brothers an' sisters are smaller'n you."

He did not answer the rebuke. He was not much of a talker. Also, he ceased his hungry glancing for more. He was uncomplaining, with a patience that was as terrible as the school in which it had been learned. He finished his coffee, wiped his mouth on the back of his hand, and started to rise.

"Wait a second," she said hastily. "I guess the loaf kin stand you another slice -- a thin un."

There was legerdemain in her actions. With all the seeming of cutting a slice from the loaf for him, she put loaf and slice back in the bread box and conveyed to him one of her own two slices. She believed she had deceived him, but he had noted her sleight-of-hand. Nevertheless, he took the bread shamelessly. He had a philosophy that his mother, what of her chronic sickliness, was not much of an eater anyway.

She saw that he was chewing the bread dry, and reached over and emptied her coffee cup into his.

"Don't set good somehow on my stomach this morning," she explained.

A distant whistle, prolonged and shrieking, brought both of them to their feet. She glanced at the tin alarm-clock on the shelf. The hands stood at half-past five. The rest of the factory world was just arousing from sleep. She drew a shawl about her shoulders, and on her head put a dingy hat, shapeless and ancient.

"We've got to run," she said, turning the wick of the lamp and blowing down the chimney.

They groped their way out and down the stairs. It was clear and cold, and Johnny shivered at the first contact with the outside air. The stars had not yet begun to pale in the sky, and the city lay in blackness. Both Johnny and his mother shuffled their feet as they walked. There was no ambition in the leg muscles to swing the feet clear of the ground.

After fifteen silent minutes, his mother turned off to the right.

"Don't be late," was her final warning from out of the dark that was swallowing her up.

He made no response, steadily keeping on his way. In the factory quarter, doors were opening everywhere, and he was soon one of a multitude that pressed onward through the dark. As he entered the factory gate the whistle blew again. He glanced at the east. Across a ragged sky-line of housetops a pale light was beginning to creep. This much he saw of the day as he turned his back upon it and joined his work gang.

He took his place in one of many long rows of machines. Before him, above a bin filled with small bobbins, were large bobbins revolving rapidly. Upon these he wound the jute-twine of the small bobbins. The work was simple. All that was required was celerity. The small bobbins were emptied so rapidly, and there were so many large bobbins that did the emptying, that there were no idle moments.

He worked mechanically. When a small bobbin ran out, he used his left hand for a brake, stopping the large bobbin and at the same time, with thumb and forefinger, catching the flying end of twine. Also, at the same time, with his right hand, he caught up the loose twine-end of a small bobbin. These various acts with both hands were performed simultaneously and swiftly. Then there would come a flash of his hands as he looped the weaver's knot and released the bobbin. There was nothing difficult about weaver's knots. He once boasted he could tie them in his sleep. And for that matter, he sometimes did, toiling centuries long in a single night at tying an endless succession of weaver's knots.

Some of the boys shirked, wasting time and machinery by not replacing the small bobbins when they ran out. And there was an overseer to prevent this. He caught Johnny's neighbor at the trick, and boxed his ears.

"Look at Johnny there -- why ain't you like him?" the overseer wrathfully demanded.

Johnny's bobbins were running full blast, but he did not thrill at the indirect praise. There had been a time . . . but that was long ago, very long ago. His apathetic face was expressionless as he listened to himself being held up as a shining example. He was the perfect worker. He knew that. He had been told so, often. It was a commonplace, and besides it didn't seem to mean anything to him any more. From the perfect worker he had evolved into the perfect machine. When his work went wrong, it was with him as with the machine, due to faulty material. It would have been as possible for a perfect nail-die to cut imperfect nails as for him to make a mistake.

And small wonder. There had never been a time when he had not been in intimate relationship with machines. Machinery had almost been bred into him, and at any rate he had been brought up on it. Twelve years before, there had been a small flutter of excitement in the loom room of this very mill. Johnny's mother had fainted. They stretched her out on the floor in the midst of the shrieking machines. A couple of elderly women were called from their looms. The foreman assisted. And in a few minutes there was one more soul in the loom room than had entered by the doors. It was Johnny, born with the pounding, crashing roar of the looms in his ears, drawing with his first breath the warm, moist air that was thick with flying lint. He had coughed that first day in order to rid his lungs of the lint; and for the same reason he had coughed ever since.

The boy alongside of Johnny whimpered and sniffed. The boy's face was convulsed with hatred for the overseer who kept a threatening eye on him from a distance; but every bobbin was running full. The boy yelled terrible oaths into the whirling bobbins before him; but the sound did not carry half a dozen feet, the roaring of the room holding it in and containing it like a wall.

Of all this Johnny took no notice. He had a way of accepting things. Besides, things grow monotonous by repetition, and this particular happening he had witnessed many times. It seemed to him as useless to oppose the overseer as to defy the will of a machine. Machines were made to go in certain ways and to perform certain tasks. It was the same with the overseer.

But at eleven o'clock there was excitement in the room. In an apparently occult way the excitement instantly permeated everywhere. The one-legged boy who worked on the other side of Johnny bobbed swiftly across the floor to a bin truck that stood empty. Into this he dived out of sight, crutch and all. The superintendent of the mill was coming along, accompanied by a young man. He was well dressed and wore a starched shirt -- a gentleman, in Johnny's classification of men, and also, "the Inspector."

He looked sharply at the boys as he passed along. Sometimes he stopped and asked questions. When he did so, he was compelled to shout at the top of his lungs, at which moments his face was ludicrously contorted with the strain of making himself heard. His quick eye noted the empty machine alongside of Johnny's, but he said nothing. Johnny also caught his eye, and he stopped abruptly. He caught Johnny by the arm to draw him back a step from the machine; but with an exclamation of surprise he released the arm.

"Pretty skinny," the superintendent laughed anxiously.

"Pipe stems," was the answer. "Look at those legs. The boy's got the rickets -- incipient, but he's got them. If epilepsy doesn't get him in the end, it will be because tuberculosis gets him first."

Johnny listened, but did not understand. Furthermore he was not interested in future ills. There was an immediate and more serious ill that threatened him in the form of the inspector.

"Now, my boy, I want you to tell me the truth," the inspector said, or shouted, bending close to the boy's ear to make him hear. "How old are you?"

"Fourteen," Johnny lied, and he lied with the full force of his lungs. So loudly did he lie that it started him off in a dry, hacking cough that lifted the lint which had been settling in his lungs all morning.

"Looks sixteen at least," said the superintendent.

"Or sixty," snapped the inspector.

"He's always looked that way."

"How long?" asked the inspector, quickly.

"For years. Never gets a bit older."

"Or younger, I dare say. I suppose he's worked here all those years?"

"Off and on -- but that was before the new law was passed," the superintendent hastened to add. "Machine idle?" the inspector asked, pointing at the unoccupied machine beside Johnny's, in which the part-filled bobbins were flying like mad.

"Looks that way." The superintendent motioned the overseer to him and shouted in his ear and pointed at the machine. "Machine's idle," he reported back to the inspector.

They passed on, and Johnny returned to his work, relieved in that the ill had been averted. But the one-legged boy was not so fortunate. The sharp-eyed inspector haled him out at arm's length from the bin truck. His lips were quivering, and his face had all the expression of one upon whom was fallen profound and irremediable disaster. The overseer looked astounded, as though for the first time he had laid eyes on the boy, while the superintendent's face expressed shock and displeasure.

"I know him," the inspector said. "He's twelve years old. I've had him discharged from three factories inside the year. This makes the fourth."

He turned to the one-legged boy. "You promised me, word and honor, that you'd go to school."

The one-legged boy burst into tears. "Please, Mr. Inspector, two babies died on us, and we're awful poor."

"What makes you cough that way?" the inspector demanded, as though charging him with crime.

And as in denial of guilt, the one-legged boy replied: "It ain't nothin'. I jes' caught a cold last week, Mr. Inspector, that's all."

In the end the one-legged boy went out of the room with the inspector, the latter accompanied by the anxious and protesting superintendent. After that monotony settled down again. The long morning and the longer afternoon wore away and the whistle blew for quitting time. Darkness had already fallen when Johnny passed out through the factory gate. In the interval the sun had made a golden ladder of the sky, flooded the world with its gracious warmth, and dropped down and disappeared in the west behind a ragged sky-line of housetops.

Supper was the family meal of the day -- the one meal at which Johnny encountered his younger brothers and sisters. It partook of the nature of an encounter, to him, for he was very old, while they were distressingly young. He had no patience with their excessive and amazing juvenility. He did not understand it. His own childhood was too far behind him. He was like an old and irritable man, annoyed by the turbulence of their young spirits that was to him arrant silliness. He glowered silently over his food, finding compensation in the thought that they would soon have to go to work. That would take the edge off of them and make them sedate and dignified -- like him. Thus it was, after the fashion of the human, that Johnny made of himself a yardstick with which to measure the universe.

During the meal, his mother explained in various ways and with infinite repetition that she was trying to do the best she could; so that it was with relief, the scant meal ended, that Johnny shoved back his chair and arose. He debated for a moment between bed and the front door, and finally went out the latter. He did not go far. He sat down on the stoop, his knees drawn up and his narrow shoulders drooping forward, his elbows on his knees and the palms of his hands supporting his chin. As he sat there, he did no thinking. He was just resting. So far as his mind was concerned, it was asleep. His brothers and sisters came out, and with other children played noisily about him. An electric globe on the corner lighted their frolics. He was peevish and irritable, that they knew; but the spirit of adventure lured them into teasing him. They joined hands before him, and, keeping time with their bodies, chanted in his face weird and uncomplimentary doggerel. At first he snarled curses at them -- curses he had learned from the lips of various foremen. Finding this futile, and remembering his dignity, he relapsed into dogged silence.

His brother Will, next to him in age, having just passed his tenth birthday, was the ring-leader. Johnny did not possess particularly kindly feelings toward him. His life had early been embittered by continual giving over and giving way to Will. He had a definite feeling that Will was greatly in his debt and was ungrateful about it. In his own playtime, far back in the dim past, he had been robbed of a large part of that playtime by being compelled to take care of Will. Will was a baby then, and then, as now, their mother had spent her days in the mills. To Johnny had fallen the part of little father and little mother as well.

Will seemed to show the benefit of the giving over and the giving way. He was well-built, fairly rugged, as tall as his elder brother and even heavier. It was as though the life-blood of the one had been diverted into the other's veins. And in spirits it was the same. Johnny was jaded, worn out, without resilience, while his younger brother seemed bursting and spilling over with exuberance.

The mocking chant rose louder and louder. Will leaned closer as he danced, thrusting out his tongue. Johnny's left arm shot out and caught the other around the neck. At the same time he rapped his bony fist to the other's nose. It was a pathetically bony fist, but that it was sharp to hurt was evidenced by the squeal of pain it produced. The other children were uttering frightened cries, while Johnny's sister, Jennie, had dashed into the house.

He thrust Will from him, kicked him savagely on the shins, then reached for him and slammed him face downward in the dirt. Nor did he release him till the face had been rubbed into the dirt several times. Then the mother arrived, an anaemic whirlwind of solicitude and maternal wrath.

"Why can't he leave me alone?" was Johnny's reply to her upbraiding. "Can't he see I'm tired?"

"I'm as big as you," Will raged in her arms, his face a mess of tears, dirt, and blood. "I'm as big as you now, an' I'm goin' to git bigger. Then I'll lick you -- see if I don't."

"You ought to be to work, seein' how big you are," Johnny snarled. "That's what's the matter with you. You ought to be to work. An' it's up to your ma to put you to work."

"But he's too young," she protested. "He's only a little boy."

"I was younger'n him when I started to work."

Johnny's mouth was open, further to express the sense of unfairness that he felt, but the mouth closed with a snap. He turned gloomily on his heel and stalked into the house and to bed. The door of his room was open to let in warmth from the kitchen. As he undressed in the semi-darkness he could hear his mother talking with a neighbor woman who had dropped in. His mother was crying, and her speech was punctuated with spiritless sniffles.

"I can't make out what's gittin' into Johnny," he could hear her say. "He didn't used to be this way. He was a patient little angel.

"An' he is a good boy," she hastened to defend. "He's worked faithful, an' he did go to work too young. But it wasn't my fault. I do the best I can, I'm sure."

Prolonged sniffling from the kitchen, and Johnny murmured to himself as his eyelids closed down, "You betcher life I've worked faithful."

The next morning he was torn bodily by his mother from the grip of sleep. Then came the meagre breakfast, the tramp through the dark, and the pale glimpse of day across the housetops as he turned his back on it and went in through the factory gate. It was another day, of all the days, and all the days were alike.

And yet there had been variety in his life -- at the times he changed from one job to another, or was taken sick. When he was six, he was little mother and father to Will and the other children still younger. At seven he went into the mills -- winding bobbins. When he was eight, he got work in another mill. His new job was marvellously easy. All he had to do was to sit down with a little stick in his hand and guide a stream of cloth that flowed past him. This stream of cloth came out of the maw of a machine, passed over a hot roller, and went on its way elsewhere. But he sat always in the one place, beyond the reach of daylight, a gas-jet flaring over him, himself part of the mechanism.

He was very happy at that job, in spite of the moist heat, for he was still young and in possession of dreams and illusions. And wonderful dreams he dreamed as he watched the streaming cloth streaming endlessly by. But there was no exercise about the work, no call upon his mind, and he dreamed less and less, while his mind grew torpid and drowsy. Nevertheless, he earned two dollars a week, and two dollars represented the difference between acute starvation and chronic underfeeding.

But when he was nine, he lost his job. Measles was the cause of it. After he recovered, he got work in a glass factory. The pay was better, and the work demanded skill. It was piece-work, and the more skilful he was, the bigger wages he earned. Here was incentive. And under this incentive he developed into a remarkable worker.

It was simple work, the tying of glass stoppers into small bottles. At his waist he carried a bundle of twine. He held the bottles between his knees so that he might work with both hands. Thus, in a sitting position and bending over his own knees, his narrow shoulders grew humped and his chest was contracted for ten hours each day. This was not good for the lungs, but he tied three hundred dozen bottles a day.

The superintendent was very proud of him, and brought visitors to look at him. In ten hours three hundred dozen bottles passed through his hands. This meant that he had attained machine-like perfection. All waste movements were eliminated. Every motion of his thin arms, every movement of a muscle in the thin fingers, was swift and accurate. He worked at high tension, and the result was that he grew nervous. At night his muscles twitched in his sleep, and in the daytime he could not relax and rest. He remained keyed up and his muscles continued to twitch. Also he grew sallow and his lint-cough grew worse. Then pneumonia laid hold of the feeble lungs within the contracted chest, and he lost his job in the glass-works. Now he had returned to the jute mills where he had first begun with winding bobbins. But promotion was waiting for him. He was a good worker. He would next go on the starcher, and later he would go into the loom room. There was nothing after that except increased efficiency.

The machinery ran faster than when he had first gone to work, and his mind ran slower. He no longer dreamed at all, though his earlier years had been full of dreaming. Once he had been in love. It was when he first began guiding the cloth over the hot roller, and it was with the daughter of the superintendent. She was much older than he, a young woman, and he had seen her at a distance only a paltry half-dozen times. But that made no difference. On the surface of the cloth stream that poured past him, he pictured radiant futures wherein he performed prodigies of toil, invented miraculous machines, won to the mastership of the mills, and in the end took her in his arms and kissed her soberly on the brow.

But that was all in the long ago, before he had grown too old and tired to love. Also, she had married and gone away, and his mind had gone to sleep. Yet it had been a wonderful experience, and he used often to look back upon it as other men and women look back upon the time they believed in fairies. He had never believed in fairies nor Santa Claus; but he had believed implicitly in the smiling future his imagination had wrought into the steaming cloth stream.

He had become a man very early in life. At seven, when he drew his first wages, began his adolescence. A certain feeling of independence crept up in him, and the relationship between him and his mother changed. Somehow, as an earner and breadwinner, doing his own work in the world, he was more like an equal with her. Manhood, full-blown manhood, had come when he was eleven, at which time he had gone to work on the night shift for six months. No child works on the night shift and remains a child.

There had been several great events in his life. One of these had been when his mother bought some California prunes. Two others had been the two times when she cooked custard. Those had been events. He remembered them kindly. And at that time his mother had told him of a blissful dish she would sometime make -- "floating island," she had called it, "better than custard." For years he had looked forward to the day when he would sit down to the table with floating island before him, until at last he had relegated the idea of it to the limbo of unattainable ideals.

Once he found a silver quarter lying on the sidewalk. That, also, was a great event in his life, withal a tragic one. He knew his duty on the instant the silver flashed on his eyes, before even he had picked it up. At home, as usual, there was not enough to eat, and home he should have taken it as he did his wages every Saturday night. Right conduct in this case was obvious; but he never had any spending of his money, and he was suffering from candy hunger. He was ravenous for the sweets that only on red-letter days he had ever tasted in his life.

He did not attempt to deceive himself. He knew it was sin, and deliberately he sinned when he went on a fifteen-cent candy debauch. Ten cents he saved for a future orgy; but not being accustomed to the carrying of money, he lost the ten cents. This occurred at the time when he was suffering all the torments of conscience, and it was to him an act of divine retribution. He had a frightened sense of the closeness of an awful and wrathful God. God had seen, and God had been swift to punish, denying him even the full wages of sin.

In memory he always looked back upon that event as the one great criminal deed of his life, and at the recollection his conscience always awoke and gave him another twinge. It was the one skeleton in his closet. Also, being so made and circumstanced, he looked back upon the deed with regret. He was dissatisfied with the manner in which he had spent the quarter. He could have invested it better, and, out of his later knowledge of the quickness of God, he would have beaten God out by spending the whole quarter at one fell swoop. In retrospect he spent the quarter a thousand times, and each time to better advantage.

There was one other memory of the past, dim and faded, but stamped into his soul everlasting by the savage feet of his father. It was more like a nightmare than a remembered vision of a concrete thing -- more like the race-memory of man that makes him fall in his sleep and that goes back to his arboreal ancestry.

This particular memory never came to Johnny in broad daylight when he was wide awake. It came at night, in bed, at the moment that his consciousness was sinking down and losing itself in sleep. It always aroused him to frightened wakefulness, and for the moment, in the first sickening start, it seemed to him that he lay crosswise on the foot of the bed. In the bed were the vague forms of his father and mother. He never saw what his father looked like. He had but one impression of his father, and that was that he had savage and pitiless feet.

His earlier memories lingered with him, but he had no late memories. All days were alike. Yesterday or last year were the same as a thousand years -- or a minute. Nothing ever happened. There were no events to mark the march of time. Time did not march. It stood always still. It was only the whirling machines that moved, and they moved nowhere -- in spite of the fact that they moved faster.

\* \* \*

When he was fourteen, he went to work on the starcher. It was a colossal event. Something had at last happened that could be remembered beyond a night's sleep or a week's pay-day. It marked an era. It was a machine Olympiad, a thing to date from. "When I went to work on the starcher," or, "after," or "before I went to work on the starcher," were sentences often on his lips.

He celebrated his sixteenth birthday by going into the loom room and taking a loom. Here was an incentive again, for it was piece-work. And he excelled, because the clay of him had been moulded by the mills into the perfect machine. At the end of three months he was running two looms, and, later, three and four.

At the end of his second year at the looms he was turning out more yards than any other weaver, and more than twice as much as some of the less skilful ones. And at home things began to prosper as he approached the full stature of his earning power. Not, however, that his increased earnings were in excess of need. The children were growing up. They ate more. And they were going to school, and school-books cost money. And somehow, the faster he worked, the faster climbed the prices of things. Even the rent went up, though the house had fallen from bad to worse disrepair.

He had grown taller; but with his increased height he seemed leaner than ever. Also, he was more nervous. With the nervousness increased his peevishness and irritability. The children had learned by many bitter lessons to fight shy of him. His mother respected him for his earning power, but somehow her respect was tinctured with fear.

There was no joyousness in life for him. The procession of the days he never saw. The nights he slept away in twitching unconsciousness. The rest of the time he worked, and his consciousness was machine consciousness. Outside this his mind was a blank. He had no ideals, and but one illusion; namely, that he drank excellent coffee. He was a work-beast. He had no mental life whatever; yet deep down in the crypts of his mind, unknown to him, were being weighed and sifted every hour of his toil, every movement of his hands, every twitch of his muscles, and preparations were making for a future course of action that would amaze him and all his little world.

It was in the late spring that he came home from work one night aware of unusual tiredness. There was a keen expectancy in the air as he sat down to the table, but he did not notice. He went through the meal in moody silence, mechanically eating what was before him. The children um'd and ah'd and made smacking noises with their mouths. But he was deaf to them.

"D'ye know what you're eatin'?" his mother demanded at last, desperately.

He looked vacantly at the dish before him, and vacantly at her.

"Floatin' island," she announced triumphantly.

"Oh," he said.

"Floating island!" the children chorussed loudly.

"Oh," he said. And after two or three mouthfuls, he added, "guess I ain't hungry to-night."

He dropped the spoon, shoved back his chair, and arose wearily from the table.

"An' I guess I'll go to bed."

His feet dragged more heavily than usual as he crossed the kitchen floor. Undressing was a Titan's task, a monstrous futility, and he wept weakly as he crawled into bed, one shoe still on. He was aware of a rising, swelling something inside his head that made his brain thick and fuzzy. His lean fingers felt as big as his wrist, while in the ends of them was a remoteness of sensation vague and fuzzy like his brain. The small of his back ached intolerably. All his bones ached. He ached everywhere. And in his head began the shrieking, pounding, crashing, roaring of a million looms. All space was filled with flying shuttles. They darted in and out, intricately, amongst the stars. He worked a thousand looms himself, and ever they speeded up, faster and faster, and his brain unwound, faster and faster, and became the thread that fed the thousand flying shuttles.

He did not go to work next morning. He was too busy weaving colossally on the thousand looms that ran inside his head. His mother went to work, but first she sent for the doctor. It was a severe attack of la grippe, he said. Jennie served as nurse and carried out his instructions.

It was a very severe attack, and it was a week before Johnny dressed and tottered feebly across the floor. Another week, the doctor said, and he would be fit to return to work. The foreman of the loom room visited him on Sunday afternoon, the first day of his convalescence. The best weaver in the room, the foreman told his mother. His job would be held for him. He could come back to work a week from Monday.

"Why don't you thank 'im, Johnny?" his mother asked anxiously.

"He's ben that sick he ain't himself yet," she explained apologetically to the visitor.

Johnny sat hunched up and gazing steadfastly at the floor. He sat in the same position long after the foreman had gone. It was warm outdoors, and he sat on the stoop in the afternoon. Sometimes his lips moved. He seemed lost in endless calculations.

Next morning, after the day grew warm, he took his seat on the stoop. He had pencil and paper this time with which to continue his calculations, and he calculated painfully and amazingly.

"What comes after millions?" he asked at noon, when Will came home from school. "An' how d'ye work 'em?"

That afternoon finished his task. Each day, but without paper and pencil, he returned to the stoop. He was greatly absorbed in the one tree that grew across the street. He studied it for hours at a time, and was unusually interested when the wind swayed its branches and fluttered its leaves. Throughout the week he seemed lost in a great communion with himself. On Sunday, sitting on the stoop, he laughed aloud, several times, to the perturbation of his mother, who had not heard him laugh in years.

Next morning, in the early darkness, she came to his bed to rouse him. He had had his fill of sleep all week, and awoke easily. He made no struggle, nor did he attempt to hold on to the bedding when she stripped it from him. He lay quietly, and spoke quietly.

"It ain't no use, ma."

"You'll be late," she said, under the impression that he was still stupid with sleep.

"I'm awake, ma, an' I tell you it ain't no use. You might as well lemme alone. I ain't goin' to git up."

"But you'll lose your job!" she cried.

"I ain't goin' to git up," he repeated in a strange, passionless voice.

She did not go to work herself that morning. This was sickness beyond any sickness she had ever known. Fever and delirium she could understand; but this was insanity. She pulled the bedding up over him and sent Jennie for the doctor.

When that person arrived, Johnny was sleeping gently, and gently he awoke and allowed his pulse to be taken.

"Nothing the matter with him," the doctor reported. "Badly debilitated, that's all. Not much meat on his bones."

"He's always been that way," his mother volunteered.

"Now go 'way, ma, an' let me finish my snooze."

Johnny spoke sweetly and placidly, and sweetly and placidly he rolled over on his side and went to sleep.

At ten o'clock he awoke and dressed himself. He walked out into the kitchen, where he found his mother with a frightened expression on her face.

"I'm goin' away, ma," he announced, "an' I jes' want to say good-by." She threw her apron over her head and sat down suddenly and wept. He waited patiently.

"I might a-known it," she was sobbing.

"Where?" she finally asked, removing the apron from her head and gazing up at him with a stricken face in which there was little curiosity.

"I don't know -- anywhere."

As he spoke, the tree across the street appeared with dazzling brightness on his inner vision. It seemed to lurk just under his eyelids, and he could see it whenever he wished.

"An' your job?" she quavered.

"I ain't never goin' to work again."

"My God, Johnny!" she wailed, "don't say that!"

What he had said was blasphemy to her. As a mother who hears her child deny God, was Johnny's mother shocked by his words.

"What's got into you, anyway?" she demanded, with a lame attempt at imperativeness.

"Figures," he answered. "Jes' figures. I've ben doin' a lot of figurin' this week, an' it's most surprisin'."

"I don't see what that's got to do with it," she sniffled.

Johnny smiled patiently, and his mother was aware of a distinct shock at the persistent absence of his peevishness and irritability.

"I'll show you," he said. "I'm plum' tired out. What makes me tired? Moves. I've ben movin' ever since I was born. I'm tired of movin', an' I ain't goin' to move any more. Remember when I worked in the glass-house? I used to do three hundred dozen a day. Now I reckon I made about ten different moves to each bottle. That's thirty-six thousan' moves a day. Ten days, three hundred an' sixty thousan' moves a day. One month, one million an' eighty thousan' moves. Chuck out the eighty thousan' -- " he spoke with the complacent beneficence of a philanthropist -- "chuck out the eighty thousan', that leaves a million moves a month -- twelve million moves a year.

"At the looms I'm movin' twic'st as much. That makes twenty-five million moves a year, an' it seems to me I've ben a movin' that way 'most a million years.

"Now this week I ain't moved at all. I ain't made one move in hours an' hours. I tell you it was swell, jes' settin' there, hours an' hours, an' doin' nothin'. I ain't never ben happy before. I never had any time. I've ben movin' all the time. That ain't no way to be happy. An' I ain't goin' to do it any more. I'm jes' goin' to set, an' set, an' rest, an' rest, and then rest some more."

"But what's goin' to come of Will an' the children?" she asked despairingly.

"That's it, `Will an' the children,'" he repeated.

But there was no bitterness in his voice. He had long known his mother's ambition for the younger boy, but the thought of it no longer rankled. Nothing mattered any more. Not even that.

"I know, ma, what you've ben plannin' for Will -- keepin' him in school to make a bookkeeper out of him. But it ain't no use, I've quit. He's got to go to work."

"An' after I have brung you up the way I have," she wept, starting to cover her head with the apron and changing her mind.

"You never brung me up," he answered with sad kindliness. "brung myself up, ma, an' I brung up Will. He's bigger'n me, an' heavier, an' taller. When I was a kid, I reckon I didn't git enough to eat. When he come along an' was a kid, I was workin' an' earnin' grub for him too. But that's done with. Will can go to work, same as me, or he can go to hell, I don't care which. I'm tired. I'm goin' now. Ain't you goin' to say good-by?"

She made no reply. The apron had gone over her head again, and she was crying. He paused a moment in the doorway.

"I'm sure I done the best I knew how," she was sobbing.

He passed out of the house and down the street. A wan delight came into his face at the sight of the lone tree. "Jes' ain't goin' to do nothin'," he said to himself, half aloud, in a crooning tone. He glanced wistfully up at the sky, but the bright sun dazzled and blinded him.

It was a long walk he took, and he did not walk fast. It took him past the jute-mill. The muffled roar of the loom room came to his ears, and he smiled. It was a gentle, placid smile. He hated no one, not even the pounding, shrieking machines. There was no bitterness in him, nothing but an inordinate hunger for rest.

The houses and factories thinned out and the open spaces increased as he approached the country. At last the city was behind him, and he was walking down a leafy lane beside the railroad track. He did not walk like a man. He did not look like a man. He was a travesty of the human. It was a twisted and stunted and nameless piece of life that shambled like a sickly ape, arms loose-hanging, stoop-shouldered, narrow-chested, grotesque and terrible.

He passed by a small railroad station and lay down in the grass under a tree. All afternoon he lay there. Sometimes he dozed, with muscles that twitched in his sleep. When awake, he lay without movement, watching the birds or looking up at the sky through the branches of the tree above him. Once or twice he laughed aloud, but without relevance to anything he had seen or felt.

After twilight had gone, in the first darkness of the night, a freight train rumbled into the station. When the engine was switching cars on to the side-track, Johnny crept along the side of the train. He pulled open the side-door of an empty box-car and awkwardly and laboriously climbed in. He closed the door. The engine whistled. Johnny was lying down, and in the darkness he smiled.

**Jack London. “To Build A Fire”**

He travels fastest who travels alone . . . but not after the frost has dropped below zero fifty degrees or more.—Yukon Code.

DAY HAD BROKEN cold and gray, exceedingly cold and gray, when the man turned aside from the main Yukon trail and climbed the high earth-bank, where a dim and little-travelled trail led eastward through the fat spruce timberland. It was a steep bank, and he paused for breath at the top, excusing the act to himself by looking at his watch. It was nine o'clock. There was no sun nor hint of sun, though there was not a cloud in the sky. It was a clear day, and yet there seemed an intangible pall over the face of things, a subtle gloom that made the day dark, and that was due to the absence of sun. This fact did not worry the man. He was used to the lack of sun. It had been days since he had seen the sun, and he knew that a few more days must pass before that cheerful orb, due south, would just peep above the sky-line and dip immediately from view.

“The Yukon lay a mile wide and hidden under three feet of ice.”

The man flung a look back along the way he had come. The Yukon lay a mile wide and hidden under three feet of ice. On top of this ice were as many feet of snow. It was all pure white, rolling in gentle undulations where the ice-jams of the freeze-up had formed. North and south, as far as his eye could see, it was unbroken white, save for a dark hair-line that curved and twisted from around the spruce-covered island to the south, and that curved and twisted away into the north, where it disappeared behind another spruce-covered island. This dark hair-line was the trail—the main trail—that led south five hundred miles to the Chilcoot Pass, Dyea, and salt water; and that led north seventy miles to Dawson, and still on to the north a thousand miles to Nulato, and finally to St. Michael on Bering Sea, a thousand miles and half a thousand more.

But all this—the mysterious, far-reaching hair-line trail, the absence of sun from the sky, the tremendous cold, and the strangeness and weirdness of it all—made no impression on the man. It was not because he was long used to it. He was a newcomer in the land, a chechaquo, and this was his first winter. The trouble with him was that he was without imagination. He was quick and alert in the things of life, but only in the things, and not in the significances. Fifty degrees below zero meant eighty-odd degrees of frost. Such fact impressed him as being cold and uncomfortable, and that was all. It did not lead him to meditate upon his frailty as a creature of temperature, and upon man's frailty in general, able only to live within certain narrow limits of heat and cold; and from there on it did not lead him to the conjectural field of immortality and man's place in the universe. Fifty degrees below zero stood for a bite of frost that hurt and that must be guarded against by the use of mittens, ear-flaps, warm moccasins, and thick socks. Fifty degrees below zero was to him just precisely fifty degrees below zero. That there should be anything more to it than that was a thought that never entered his head.

As he turned to go on, he spat speculatively. There was a sharp, explosive crackle that startled him. He spat again. And again, in the air, before it could fall to the snow, the spittle crackled. He knew that at fifty below spittle crackled on the snow, but this spittle had crackled in the air. Undoubtedly it was colder than fifty below—how much colder he did not know. But the temperature did not matter. He was bound for the old claim on the left fork of Henderson Creek, where the boys were already. They had come over across the divide from the Indian Creek country, while he had come the roundabout way to take a look at the possibilities of getting out logs in the spring from the islands in the Yukon. He would be in to camp by six o'clock; a bit after dark, it was true, but the boys would be there, a fire would be going, and a hot supper would be ready. As for lunch, he pressed his hand against the protruding bundle under his jacket. It was also under his shirt, wrapped up in a handkerchief and lying against the naked skin. It was the only way to keep the biscuits from freezing. He smiled agreeably to himself as he thought of those biscuits, each cut open and sopped in bacon grease, and each enclosing a generous slice of fried bacon.

He plunged in among the big spruce trees. The trail was faint. A foot of snow had fallen since the last sled had passed over, and he was glad he was without a sled, travelling light. In fact, he carried nothing but the lunch wrapped in the handkerchief. He was surprised, however, at the cold. It certainly was cold, he concluded, as he rubbed his numb nose and cheek-bones with his mittened hand. He was a warm-whiskered man, but the hair on his face did not protect the high cheek-bones and the eager nose that thrust itself aggressively into the frosty air.

“At the man's heels trotted a dog, a big native husky, the proper wolf-dog,...”

At the man's heels trotted a dog, a big native husky, the proper wolf-dog, gray-coated and without any visible or temperamental difference from its brother, the wild wolf. The animal was depressed by the tremendous cold. It knew that it was no time for travelling. Its instinct told it a truer tale than was told to the man by the man's judgment. In reality, it was not merely colder than fifty below zero; it was colder than sixty below, than seventy below. It was seventy-five below zero. Since the freezing-point is thirty-two above zero, it meant that one hundred and seven degrees of frost obtained. The dog did not know anything about thermometers. Possibly in its brain there was no sharp consciousness of a condition of very cold such as was in the man's brain. But the brute had its instinct. It experienced a vague but menacing apprehension that subdued it and made it slink along at the man's heels, and that made it question eagerly every unwonted movement of the man as if expecting him to go into camp or to seek shelter somewhere and build a fire. The dog had learned fire, and it wanted fire, or else to burrow under the snow and cuddle its warmth away from the air.

The frozen moisture of its breathing had settled on its fur in a fine powder of frost, and especially were its jowls, muzzle, and eyelashes whitened by its crystalled breath. The man's red beard and mustache were likewise frosted, but more solidly, the deposit taking the form of ice and increasing with every warm, moist breath he exhaled. Also, the man was chewing tobacco, and the muzzle of ice held his lips so rigidly that he was unable to clear his chin when he expelled the juice. The result was that a crystal beard of the color and solidity of amber was increasing its length on his chin. If he fell down it would shatter itself, like glass, into brittle fragments. But he did not mind the appendage. It was the penalty all tobacco-chewers paid in that country, and he had been out before in two cold snaps. They had not been so cold as this, he knew, but by the spirit thermometer at Sixty Mile he knew they had been registered at fifty below and at fifty-five.

He held on through the level stretch of woods for several miles, crossed a wide flat of niggerheads, and dropped down a bank to the frozen bed of a small stream. This was Henderson Creek, and he knew he was ten miles from the forks. He looked at his watch. It was ten o'clock. He was making four miles an hour, and he calculated that he would arrive at the forks at half-past twelve. He decided to celebrate that event by eating his lunch there.

The dog dropped in again at his heels, with a tail drooping discouragement, as the man swung along the creek-bed. The furrow of the old sled-trail was plainly visible, but a dozen inches of snow covered the marks of the last runners. In a month no man had come up or down that silent creek. The man held steadily on. He was not much given to thinking, and just then particularly he had nothing to think about save that he would eat lunch at the forks and that at six o'clock he would be in camp with the boys. There was nobody to talk to; and, had there been, speech would have been impossible because of the ice-muzzle on his mouth. So he continued monotonously to chew tobacco and to increase the length of his amber beard.

Once in a while the thought reiterated itself that it was very cold and that he had never experienced such cold. As he walked along he rubbed his cheek-bones and nose with the back of his mittened hand. He did this automatically, now and again changing hands. But rub as he would, the instant he stopped his cheek-bones went numb, and the following instant the end of his nose went numb. He was sure to frost his cheeks; he knew that, and experienced a pang of regret that he had not devised a nose-strap of the sort Bud wore in cold snaps. Such a strap passed across the cheeks, as well, and saved them. But it didn't matter much, after all. What were frosted cheeks? A bit painful, that was all; they were never serious.

“They were traps. They hid pools of water under the snow...”

Empty as the man's mind was of thoughts, he was keenly observant, and he noticed the changes in the creek, the curves and bends and timber-jams, and always he sharply noted where he placed his feet. Once, coming around a bend, he shied abruptly, like a startled horse, curved away from the place where he had been walking, and retreated several paces back along the trail. The creek he knew was frozen clear to the bottom,—no creek could contain water in that arctic winter,—but he knew also that there were springs that bubbled out from the hillsides and ran along under the snow and on top the ice of the creek. He knew that the coldest snaps never froze these springs, and he knew likewise their danger. They were traps. They hid pools of water under the snow that might be three inches deep, or three feet. Sometimes a skin of ice half an inch thick covered them, and in turn was covered by the snow. Sometimes there were alternate layers of water and ice-skin, so that when one broke through he kept on breaking through for a while, sometimes wetting himself to the waist.

That was why he had shied in such panic. He had felt the give under his feet and heard the crackle of a snow-hidden ice-skin. And to get his feet wet in such a temperature meant trouble and danger. At the very least it meant delay, for he would be forced to stop and build a fire, and under its protection to bare his feet while he dried his socks and moccasins. He stood and studied the creek-bed and its banks, and decided that the flow of water came from the right. He reflected awhile, rubbing his nose and cheeks, then skirted to the left, stepping gingerly and testing the footing for each step. Once clear of the danger, he took a fresh chew of tobacco and swung along at his four-mile gait. In the course of the next two hours he came upon several similar traps. Usually the snow above the hidden pools had a sunken, candied appearance that advertised the danger. Once again, however, he had a close call; and once, suspecting danger, he compelled the dog to go on in front. The dog did not want to go. It hung back until the man shoved it forward, and then it went quickly across the white, unbroken surface. Suddenly it broke through, floundered to one side, and got away to firmer footing. It had wet its forefeet and legs, and almost immediately the water that clung to it turned to ice. It made quick efforts to lick the ice off its legs, then dropped down in the snow and began to bite out the ice that had formed between the toes. This was a matter of instinct. To permit the ice to remain would mean sore feet. It did not know this. It merely obeyed the mysterious prompting that arose from the deep crypts of its being. But the man knew, having achieved a judgment on the subject, and he removed the mitten from his right hand and helped tear out the ice-particles. He did not expose his fingers more than a minute, and was astonished at the swift numbness that smote them. It certainly was cold. He pulled on the mitten hastily, and beat the hand savagely across his chest.

At twelve o'clock the day was at its brightest. Yet the sun was too far south on its winter journey to clear the horizon. The bulge of the earth intervened between it and Henderson Creek, where the man walked under a clear sky at noon and cast no shadow. At half-past twelve, to the minute, he arrived at the forks of the creek. He was pleased at the speed he had made. If he kept it up, he would certainly be with the boys by six. He unbuttoned his jacket and shirt and drew forth his lunch. The action consumed no more than a quarter of a minute, yet in that brief moment the numbness laid hold of the exposed fingers. He did not put the mitten on, but, instead, struck the fingers a dozen sharp smashes against his leg. Then he sat down on a snow-covered log to eat. The sting that followed upon the striking of his fingers against his leg ceased so quickly that he was startled. He had had no chance to take a bite of biscuit. He struck the fingers repeatedly and returned them to the mitten, baring the other hand for the purpose of eating. He tried to take a mouthful, but the ice-muzzle prevented. He had forgotten to build a fire and thaw out. He chuckled at his foolishness, and as he chuckled he noted the numbness creeping into the exposed fingers. Also, he noted that the stinging which had first come to his toes when he sat down was already passing away. He wondered whether the toes were warm or numb. He moved them inside the moccasins and decided that they were numb.

“He strode up and down, stamping his feet and threshing his arms...”

He pulled the mitten on hurriedly and stood up. He was a bit frightened. He stamped up and down until the stinging returned into the feet. It certainly was cold, was his thought. That man from Sulphur Creek had spoken the truth when telling how cold it sometimes got in the country. And he had laughed at him at the time! That showed one must not be too sure of things. There was no mistake about it, it was cold. He strode up and down, stamping his feet and threshing his arms, until reassured by the returning warmth. Then he got out matches and proceeded to make a fire. From the undergrowth, where high water of the previous spring had lodged a supply of seasoned twigs, he got his fire-wood. Working carefully from a small beginning, he soon had a roaring fire, over which he thawed the ice from his face and in the protection of which he ate his biscuits. For the moment the cold of space was outwitted. The dog took satisfaction in the fire, stretching out close enough for warmth and far enough away to escape being singed.

When the man had finished, he filled his pipe and took his comfortable time over a smoke. Then he pulled on his mittens, settled the ear-flaps of his cap firmly about his ears, and took the creek trail up the left fork. The dog was disappointed and yearned back toward the fire. This man did not know cold. Possibly all the generations of his ancestry had been ignorant of cold, of real cold, of cold one hundred and seven degrees below freezing-point. But the dog knew; all its ancestry knew, and it had inherited the knowledge. And it knew that it was not good to walk abroad in such fearful cold. It was the time to lie snug in a hole in the snow and wait for a curtain of cloud to be drawn across the face of outer space whence this cold came. On the other hand, there was no keen intimacy between the dog and the man. The one was the toil-slave of the other, and the only caresses it had ever received were the caresses of the whip-lash and of harsh and menacing throat-sounds that threatened the whip-lash. So the dog made no effort to communicate its apprehension to the man. It was not concerned in the welfare of the man; it was for its own sake that it yearned back toward the fire. But the man whistled, and spoke to it with the sound of whip-lashes, and the dog swung in at the man's heels and followed after.

The man took a chew of tobacco and proceeded to start a new amber beard. Also, his moist breath quickly powdered with white his mustache, eyebrows, and lashes. There did not seem to be so many springs on the left fork of the Henderson, and for half an hour the man saw no signs of any. And then it happened. At a place where there were no signs, where the soft, unbroken snow seemed to advertise solidity beneath, the man broke through. It was not deep. He wet himself halfway to the knees before he floundered out to the firm crust.

He was angry, and cursed his luck aloud. He had hoped to get into camp with the boys at six o'clock, and this would delay him an hour, for he would have to build a fire and dry out his foot-gear. This was imperative at that low temperature—he knew that much; and he turned aside to the bank, which he climbed. On top, tangled in the underbrush about the trunks of several small spruce trees, was a high-water deposit of dry fire-wood—sticks and twigs, principally, but also larger portions of seasoned branches and fine, dry, last-year's grasses. He threw down several large pieces on top of the snow. This served for a foundation and prevented the young flame from drowning itself in the snow it otherwise would melt. The flame he got by touching a match to a small shred of birch-bark that he took from his pocket. This burned even more readily than paper. Placing it on the foundation, he fed the young flame with wisps of dry grass and with the tiniest dry twigs.

He worked slowly and carefully, keenly aware of his danger. Gradually, as the flame grew stronger, he increased the size of the twigs with which he fed it. He squatted in the snow, pulling the twigs out from their entanglement in the brush and feeding directly to the flame. He knew there must be no failure. When it is seventy-five below zero, a man must not fail in his first attempt to build a fire—that is, if his feet are wet. If his feet are dry, and he fails, he can run along the trail for half a mile and restore his circulation. But the circulation of wet and freezing feet cannot be restored by running when it is seventy-five below. No matter how fast he runs, the wet feet will freeze the harder.

All this the man knew. The old-timer on Sulphur Creek had told him about it the previous fall, and now he was appreciating the advice. Already all sensation had gone out of his feet. To build the fire he had been forced to remove his mittens, and the fingers had quickly gone numb. His pace of four miles an hour had kept his heart pumping blood to the surface of his body and to all the extremities. But the instant he stopped, the action of the pump eased down. The cold of space smote the unprotected tip of the planet, and he, being on that unprotected tip, received the full force of the blow. The blood of his body recoiled before it. The blood was alive, like the dog, and like the dog it wanted to hide away and cover itself up from the fearful cold. So long as he walked four miles an hour, he pumped that blood, willy-nilly, to the surface; but now it ebbed away and sank down into the recesses of his body. The extremities were the first to feel its absence. His wet feet froze the faster, and his exposed fingers numbed the faster, though they had not yet begun to freeze. Nose and cheeks were already freezing, while the skin of all his body chilled as it lost its blood.

But he was safe. Toes and nose and cheeks would be only touched by the frost, for the fire was beginning to burn with strength. He was feeding it with twigs the size of his finger. In another minute he would be able to feed it with branches the size of his wrist, and then he could remove his wet foot-gear, and, while it dried, he could keep his naked feet warm by the fire, rubbing them at first, of course, with snow. The fire was a success. He was safe. He remembered the advice of the old-timer on Sulphur Creek, and smiled. The old-timer had been very serious in laying down the law that no man must travel alone in the Klondike after fifty below. Well, here he was; he had had the accident; he was alone; and he had saved himself. Those old-timers were rather womanish, some of them, he thought. All a man had to do was to keep his head, and he was all right. Any man who was a man could travel alone. But it was surprising, the rapidity with which his cheeks and nose were freezing. And he had not thought his fingers could go lifeless in so short a time. Lifeless they were, for he could scarcely make them move together to grip a twig, and they seemed remote from his body and from him. When he touched a twig, he had to look and see whether or not he had hold of it. The wires were pretty well down between him and his finger-ends.

All of which counted for little. There was the fire, snapping and crackling and promising life with every dancing flame. He started to untie his moccasins. They were coated with ice; the thick German socks were like sheaths of iron halfway to the knees; and the moccasin strings were like rods of steel all twisted and knotted as by some conflagration. For a moment he tugged with his numb fingers, then, realizing the folly of it, he drew his sheath-knife.

But before he could cut the strings, it happened. It was his own fault or, rather, his mistake. He should not have built the fire under the spruce tree. He should have built it in the open. But it had been easier to pull the twigs from the brush and drop them directly on the fire. Now the tree under which he had done this carried a weight of snow on its boughs. No wind had blown for weeks, and each bough was fully freighted. Each time he had pulled a twig he had communicated a slight agitation to the tree—an imperceptible agitation, so far as he was concerned, but an agitation sufficient to bring about the disaster. High up in the tree one bough capsized its load of snow. This fell on the boughs beneath, capsizing them. This process continued, spreading out and involving the whole tree. It grew like an avalanche, and it descended without warning upon the man and the fire, and the fire was blotted out! Where it had burned was a mantle of fresh and disordered snow.

The man was shocked. It was as though he had just heard his own sentence of death. For a moment he sat and stared at the spot where the fire had been. Then he grew very calm. Perhaps the old-timer on Sulphur Creek was right. If he had only had a trail-mate he would have been in no danger now. The trail-mate could have built the fire. Well, it was up to him to build the fire over again, and this second time there must be no failure. Even if he succeeded, he would most likely lose some toes. His feet must be badly frozen by now, and there would be some time before the second fire was ready.

Such were his thoughts, but he did not sit and think them. He was busy all the time they were passing through his mind. He made a new foundation for a fire, this time in the open, where no treacherous tree could blot it out. Next, he gathered dry grasses and tiny twigs from the high-water flotsam. He could not bring his fingers together to pull them out, but he was able to gather them by the handful. In this way he got many rotten twigs and bits of green moss that were undesirable, but it was the best he could do. He worked methodically, even collecting an armful of the larger branches to be used later when the fire gathered strength. And all the while the dog sat and watched him, a certain yearning wistfulness in its eyes, for it looked upon him as the fire-provider, and the fire was slow in coming.

When all was ready, the man reached in his pocket for a second piece of birch-bark. He knew the bark was there, and, though he could not feel it with his fingers, he could hear its crisp rustling as he fumbled for it. Try as he would, he could not clutch hold of it. And all the time, in his consciousness, was the knowledge that each instant his feet were freezing. This thought tended to put him in a panic, but he fought against it and kept calm. He pulled on his mittens with his teeth, and threshed his arms back and forth, beating his hands with all his might against his sides. He did this sitting down, and he stood up to do it; and all the while the dog sat in the snow, its wolf-brush of a tail curled around warmly over its forefeet, its sharp wolf-ears pricked forward intently as it watched the man. And the man, as he beat and threshed with his arms and hands, felt a great surge of envy as he regarded the creature that was warm and secure in its natural covering.

After a time he was aware of the first faraway signals of sensation in his beaten fingers. The faint tingling grew stronger till it evolved into a stinging ache that was excruciating, but which the man hailed with satisfaction. He stripped the mitten from his right hand and fetched forth the birch-bark. The exposed fingers were quickly going numb again. Next he brought out his bunch of sulphur matches. But the tremendous cold had already driven the life out of his fingers. In his effort to separate one match from the others, the whole bunch fell in the snow. He tried to pick it out of the snow, but failed. The dead fingers could neither touch nor clutch. He was very careful. He drove the thought of his freezing feet, and nose, and cheeks, out of his mind, devoting his whole soul to the matches. He watched, using the sense of vision in place of that of touch, and when he saw his fingers on each side the bunch, he closed them—that is, he willed to close them, for the wires were down, and the fingers did not obey. He pulled the mitten on the right hand, and beat it fiercely against his knee. Then, with both mittened hands, he scooped the bunch of matches, along with much snow, into his lap. Yet he was no better off.

After some manipulation he managed to get the bunch between the heels of his mittened hands. In this fashion he carried it to his mouth. The ice crackled and snapped when by a violent effort he opened his mouth. He drew the lower jaw in, curled the upper lip out of the way, and scraped the bunch with his upper teeth in order to separate a match. He succeeded in getting one, which he dropped on his lap. He was no better off. He could not pick it up. Then he devised a way. He picked it up in his teeth and scratched it on his leg. Twenty times he scratched before he succeeded in lighting it. As it flamed he held it with his teeth to the birch-bark. But the burning brimstone went up his nostrils and into his lungs, causing him to cough spasmodically. The match fell into the snow and went out.

The old-timer on Sulphur Creek was right, he thought in the moment of controlled despair that ensued: after fifty below, a man should travel with a partner. He beat his hands, but failed in exciting any sensation. Suddenly he bared both hands, removing the mittens with his teeth. He caught the whole bunch between the heels of his hands. His arm-muscles not being frozen enabled him to press the hand-heels tightly against the matches. Then he scratched the bunch along his leg. It flared into flame, seventy sulphur matches at once! There was no wind to blow them out. He kept his head to one side to escape the strangling fumes, and held the blazing bunch to the birch-bark. As he so held it, he became aware of sensation in his hand. His flesh was burning. He could smell it. Deep down below the surface he could feel it. The sensation developed into pain that grew acute. And still he endured it, holding the flame of the matches clumsily to the bark that would not light readily because his own burning hands were in the way, absorbing most of the flame.

At last, when he could endure no more, he jerked his hands apart. The blazing matches fell sizzling into the snow, but the birch-bark was alight. He began laying dry grasses and the tiniest twigs on the flame. He could not pick and choose, for he had to lift the fuel between the heels of his hands. Small pieces of rotten wood and green moss clung to the twigs, and he bit them off as well as he could with his teeth. He cherished the flame carefully and awkwardly. It meant life, and it must not perish. The withdrawal of blood from the surface of his body now made him begin to shiver, and he grew more awkward. A large piece of green moss fell squarely on the little fire. He tried to poke it out with his fingers, but his shivering frame made him poke too far, and he disrupted the nucleus of the little fire, the burning grasses and tiny twigs separating and scattering. He tried to poke them together again, but in spite of the tenseness of the effort, his shivering got away with him, and the twigs were hopelessly scattered. Each twig gushed a puff of smoke and went out. The fire-provider had failed. As he looked apathetically about him, his eyes chanced on the dog, sitting across the ruins of the fire from him, in the snow, making restless, hunching movements, slightly lifting one forefoot and then the other, shifting its weight back and forth on them with wistful eagerness.

“He got on his hands and knees and crawled toward the dog.”

The sight of the dog put a wild idea into his head. He remembered the tale of the man, caught in a blizzard, who killed a steer and crawled inside the carcass, and so was saved. He would kill the dog and bury his hands in the warm body until the numbness went out of them. Then he could build another fire. He spoke to the dog, calling it to him; but in his voice was a strange note of fear that frightened the animal, who had never known the man to speak in such way before. Something was the matter, and its suspicious nature sensed danger—it knew not what danger, but somewhere, somehow, in its brain arose an apprehension of the man. It flattened its ears down at the sound of the man's voice, and its restless, hunching movements and the liftings and shiftings of its forefeet became more pronounced; but it would not come to the man. He got on his hands and knees and crawled toward the dog. This unusual posture again excited suspicion, and the animal sidled mincingly away.

The man sat up in the snow for a moment and struggled for calmness. Then he pulled on his mittens, by means of his teeth, and got upon his feet. He glanced down at first in order to assure himself that he was really standing up, for the absence of sensation in his feet left him unrelated to the earth. His erect position in itself started to drive the webs of suspicion from the dog's mind; and when he spoke peremptorily, with the sound of whip-lashes in his voice, the dog rendered its customary allegiance and came to him. As it came within reaching distance, the man lost his control. His arms flashed out to the dog, and he experienced genuine surprise when he discovered that his hands could not clutch, that there was neither bend nor feeling in the fingers. He had forgotten for the moment that they were frozen and that they were freezing more and more. All this happened quickly, and before the animal could get away, he encircled its body with his arms. He sat down in the snow, and in this fashion held the dog, while it snarled and whined and struggled.

But it was all he could do, hold its body encircled in his arms and sit there. He realized that he could not kill the dog. There was no way to do it. With his helpess hands he could neither draw nor hold his sheath-knife nor throttle the animal. He released it, and it plunged wildly away, with tail between its legs, and still snarling. It halted forty feet away and surveyed him curiously, with ears sharply pricked forward. The man looked down at his hands in order to locate them, and found them hanging on the ends of his arms. It struck him as curious that one should have to use his eyes in order to find out where his hands were. He began threshing his arms back and forth, beating the mittened hands against his sides. He did this for five minutes, violently, and his heart pumped enough blood up to the surface to put a stop to his shivering. But no sensation was aroused in the hands. He had an impression that they hung like weights on the ends of his arms, but when he tried to run the impression down, he could not find it.

A certain fear of death, dull and oppressive, came to him. This fear quickly became poignant as he realized that it was no longer a mere matter of freezing his fingers and toes, or of losing his hands and feet, but that it was a matter of life and death with the chances against him. This threw him into a panic, and he turned and ran up the creek-bed along the old, dim trail. The dog joined in behind and kept up with him. He ran blindly, without intention, in fear such as he had never known in his life. Slowly, as he ploughed and floundered through the snow, he began to see things again,—the banks of the creek, the old timber-jams, the leafless aspens, and the sky. The running made him feel better. He did not shiver. Maybe, if he ran on, his feet would thaw out; and, anyway, if he ran far enough, he would reach camp and the boys. Without doubt he would lose some fingers and toes and some of his face; but the boys would take care of him, and save the rest of him when he got there. And at the same time there was another thought in his mind that said he would never get to the camp and the boys; that it was too many miles away, that the freezing had too great a start on him, and that he would soon be stiff and dead. This thought he kept in the background and refused to consider. Sometimes it pushed itself forward and demanded to be heard, but he thrust it back and strove to think of other things.

It struck him as curious that he could run at all on feet so frozen that he could not feel them when they struck the earth and took the weight of his body. He seemed to himself to skim along above the surface, and to have no connection with the earth. Somewhere he had once seen a winged Mercury, and he wondered if Mercury felt as he felt when skimming over the earth.

“Several times he stumbled, and finally he tottered, crumpled up, and fell. . .”

His theory of running until he reached camp and the boys had one flaw in it: he lacked the endurance. Several times he stumbled, and finally he tottered, crumpled up, and fell. When he tried to rise, he failed. He must sit and rest, he decided, and next time he would merely walk and keep on going. As he sat and regained his breath, he noted that he was feeling quite warm and comfortable. He was not shivering, and it even seemed that a warm glow had come to his chest and trunk. And yet, when he touched his nose or cheeks, there was no sensation. Running would not thaw them out. Nor would it thaw out his hands and feet. Then the thought came to him that the frozen portions of his body must be extending. He tried to keep this thought down, to forget it, to think of something else; he was aware of the panicky feeling that it caused, and he was afraid of the panic. But the thought asserted itself, and persisted, until it produced a vision of his body totally frozen. This was too much, and he made another wild run along the trail. Once he slowed down to a walk, but the thought of the freezing extending itself made him run again.

And all the time the dog ran with him, at his heels. When he fell down a second time, it curled its tail over its forefeet and sat in front of him, facing him, curiously eager and intent. The warmth and security of the animal angered him, and he cursed it till it flattened down its ears appeasingly. This time the shivering came more quickly upon the man. He was losing in his battle with the frost. It was creeping into his body from all sides. The thought of it drove him on, but he ran no more than a hundred feet, when he staggered and pitched headlong. It was his last panic. When he had recovered his breath and control, he sat up and entertained in his mind the conception of meeting death with dignity. However, the conception did not come to him in such terms. His idea of it was that he had been making a fool of himself, running around like a chicken with its head cut off—such was the simile that occurred to him. Well, he was bound to freeze anyway, and he might as well take it decently. With this new-found peace of mind came the first glimmerings of drowsiness. A good idea, he thought, to sleep off to death. It was like taking an anaesthetic. Freezing was not so bad as people thought. There were lots worse ways to die.

He pictured the boys finding his body next day. Suddenly he found himself with them, coming along the trail and looking for himself. And, still with them, he came around a turn in the trail and found himself lying in the snow. He did not belong with himself any more, for even then he was out of himself, standing with the boys and looking at himself in the snow. It certainly was cold, was his thought. When he got back to the States he could tell the folks what real cold was. He drifted on from this to a vision of the old-timer on Sulphur Creek. He could see him quite clearly, warm and comfortable, and smoking a pipe.

"You were right, old hoss; you were right," the man mumbled to the old-timer of Sulphur Creek.

Then the man drowsed off into what seemed to him the most comfortable and satisfying sleep he had ever known. The dog sat facing him and waiting. The brief day drew to a close in a long, slow twilight. There were no signs of a fire to be made, and, besides, never in the dog's experience had it known a man to sit like that in the snow and make no fire. As the twilight drew on, its eager yearning for the fire mastered it, and with a great lifting and shifting of forefeet, it whined softly, then flattened its ears down in anticipation of being chidden by the man. But the man remained silent. Later, the dog whined loudly. And still later it crept close to the man and caught the scent of death. This made the animal bristle and back away. A little longer it delayed, howling under the stars that leaped and danced and shone brightly in the cold sky. Then it turned and trotted up the trail in the direction of the camp it knew, where were the other food-providers and fire-providers. – End

**George Orwell. “Shooting an Elephant”**

In Moulmein, in Lower Burma, I was hated by large numbers of people — the only time in my life that I have been important enough for this to happen to me. I was sub-divisional police officer of the town, and in an aimless, petty kind of way anti-European feeling was very bitter. No one had the guts to raise a riot, but if a European woman went through the bazaars alone somebody would probably spit betel juice over her dress. As a police officer I was an obvious target and was baited whenever it seemed safe to do so. When a nimble Burman tripped me up on the football field and the referee (another Burman) looked the other way, the crowd yelled with hideous laughter. This happened more than once. In the end the sneering yellow faces of young men that met me everywhere, the insults hooted after me when I was at a safe distance, got badly on my nerves. The young Buddhist priests were the worst of all. There were several thousands of them in the town and none of them seemed to have anything to do except stand on street corners and jeer at Europeans.

All this was perplexing and upsetting. For at that time I had already made up my mind that imperialism was an evil thing and the sooner I chucked up my job and got out of it the better. Theoretically — and secretly, of course — I was all for the Burmese and all against their oppressors, the British. As for the job I was doing, I hated it more bitterly than I can perhaps make clear. In a job like that you see the dirty work of Empire at close quarters. The wretched prisoners huddling in the stinking cages of the lock-ups, the grey, cowed faces of the long-term convicts, the scarred buttocks of the men who had been flogged with bamboos — all these oppressed me with an intolerable sense of guilt. But I could get nothing into perspective. I was young and ill-educated and I had had to think out my problems in the utter silence that is imposed on every Englishman in the East. I did not even know that the British Empire is dying, still less did I know that it is a great deal better than the younger empires that are going to supplant it. All I knew was that I was stuck between my hatred of the empire I served and my rage against the evil-spirited little beasts who tried to make my job impossible. With one part of my mind I thought of the British Raj as an unbreakable tyranny, as something clamped down, in saecula saeculorum, upon the will of prostrate peoples; with another part I thought that the greatest joy in the world would be to drive a bayonet into a Buddhist priest's guts. Feelings like these are the normal by-products of imperialism; ask any Anglo-Indian official, if you can catch him off duty.

One day something happened which in a roundabout way was enlightening. It was a tiny incident in itself, but it gave me a better glimpse than I had had before of the real nature of imperialism — the real motives for which despotic governments act. Early one morning the sub-inspector at a police station the other end of the town rang me up on the phone and said that an elephant was ravaging the bazaar. Would I please come and do something about it? I did not know what I could do, but I wanted to see what was happening and I got on to a pony and started out. I took my rifle, an old .44 Winchester and much too small to kill an elephant, but I thought the noise might be useful in terrorem. Various Burmans stopped me on the way and told me about the elephant's doings. It was not, of course, a wild elephant, but a tame one which had gone ‘must’. It had been chained up, as tame elephants always are when their attack of ‘must’ is due, but on the previous night it had broken its chain and escaped. Its mahout, the only person who could manage it when it was in that state, had set out in pursuit, but had taken the wrong direction and was now twelve hours’ journey away, and in the morning the elephant had suddenly reappeared in the town. The Burmese population had no weapons and were quite helpless against it. It had already destroyed somebody's bamboo hut, killed a cow and raided some fruit-stalls and devoured the stock; also it had met the municipal rubbish van and, when the driver jumped out and took to his heels, had turned the van over and inflicted violences upon it.

The Burmese sub-inspector and some Indian constables were waiting for me in the quarter where the elephant had been seen. It was a very poor quarter, a labyrinth of squalid bamboo huts, thatched with palmleaf, winding all over a steep hillside. I remember that it was a cloudy, stuffy morning at the beginning of the rains. We began questioning the people as to where the elephant had gone and, as usual, failed to get any definite information. That is invariably the case in the East; a story always sounds clear enough at a distance, but the nearer you get to the scene of events the vaguer it becomes. Some of the people said that the elephant had gone in one direction, some said that he had gone in another, some professed not even to have heard of any elephant. I had almost made up my mind that the whole story was a pack of lies, when we heard yells a little distance away. There was a loud, scandalized cry of ‘Go away, child! Go away this instant!’ and an old woman with a switch in her hand came round the corner of a hut, violently shooing away a crowd of naked children. Some more women followed, clicking their tongues and exclaiming; evidently there was something that the children ought not to have seen. I rounded the hut and saw a man's dead body sprawling in the mud. He was an Indian, a black Dravidian coolie, almost naked, and he could not have been dead many minutes. The people said that the elephant had come suddenly upon him round the corner of the hut, caught him with its trunk, put its foot on his back and ground him into the earth. This was the rainy season and the ground was soft, and his face had scored a trench a foot deep and a couple of yards long. He was lying on his belly with arms crucified and head sharply twisted to one side. His face was coated with mud, the eyes wide open, the teeth bared and grinning with an expression of unendurable agony. (Never tell me, by the way, that the dead look peaceful. Most of the corpses I have seen looked devilish.) The friction of the great beast's foot had stripped the skin from his back as neatly as one skins a rabbit. As soon as I saw the dead man I sent an orderly to a friend's house nearby to borrow an elephant rifle. I had already sent back the pony, not wanting it to go mad with fright and throw me if it smelt the elephant.

The orderly came back in a few minutes with a rifle and five cartridges, and meanwhile some Burmans had arrived and told us that the elephant was in the paddy fields below, only a few hundred yards away. As I started forward practically the whole population of the quarter flocked out of the houses and followed me. They had seen the rifle and were all shouting excitedly that I was going to shoot the elephant. They had not shown much interest in the elephant when he was merely ravaging their homes, but it was different now that he was going to be shot. It was a bit of fun to them, as it would be to an English crowd; besides they wanted the meat. It made me vaguely uneasy. I had no intention of shooting the elephant — I had merely sent for the rifle to defend myself if necessary — and it is always unnerving to have a crowd following you. I marched down the hill, looking and feeling a fool, with the rifle over my shoulder and an ever-growing army of people jostling at my heels. At the bottom, when you got away from the huts, there was a metalled road and beyond that a miry waste of paddy fields a thousand yards across, not yet ploughed but soggy from the first rains and dotted with coarse grass. The elephant was standing eight yards from the road, his left side towards us. He took not the slightest notice of the crowd's approach. He was tearing up bunches of grass, beating them against his knees to clean them and stuffing them into his mouth.

I had halted on the road. As soon as I saw the elephant I knew with perfect certainty that I ought not to shoot him. It is a serious matter to shoot a working elephant — it is comparable to destroying a huge and costly piece of machinery — and obviously one ought not to do it if it can possibly be avoided. And at that distance, peacefully eating, the elephant looked no more dangerous than a cow. I thought then and I think now that his attack of ‘must’ was already passing off; in which case he would merely wander harmlessly about until the mahout came back and caught him. Moreover, I did not in the least want to shoot him. I decided that I would watch him for a little while to make sure that he did not turn savage again, and then go home.

But at that moment I glanced round at the crowd that had followed me. It was an immense crowd, two thousand at the least and growing every minute. It blocked the road for a long distance on either side. I looked at the sea of yellow faces above the garish clothes-faces all happy and excited over this bit of fun, all certain that the elephant was going to be shot. They were watching me as they would watch a conjurer about to perform a trick. They did not like me, but with the magical rifle in my hands I was momentarily worth watching. And suddenly I realized that I should have to shoot the elephant after all. The people expected it of me and I had got to do it; I could feel their two thousand wills pressing me forward, irresistibly. And it was at this moment, as I stood there with the rifle in my hands, that I first grasped the hollowness, the futility of the white man's dominion in the East. Here was I, the white man with his gun, standing in front of the unarmed native crowd — seemingly the leading actor of the piece; but in reality I was only an absurd puppet pushed to and fro by the will of those yellow faces behind. I perceived in this moment that when the white man turns tyrant it is his own freedom that he destroys. He becomes a sort of hollow, posing dummy, the conventionalized figure of a sahib. For it is the condition of his rule that he shall spend his life in trying to impress the ‘natives’, and so in every crisis he has got to do what the ‘natives’ expect of him. He wears a mask, and his face grows to fit it. I had got to shoot the elephant. I had committed myself to doing it when I sent for the rifle. A sahib has got to act like a sahib; he has got to appear resolute, to know his own mind and do definite things. To come all that way, rifle in hand, with two thousand people marching at my heels, and then to trail feebly away, having done nothing — no, that was impossible. The crowd would laugh at me. And my whole life, every white man's life in the East, was one long struggle not to be laughed at.

But I did not want to shoot the elephant. I watched him beating his bunch of grass against his knees, with that preoccupied grandmotherly air that elephants have. It seemed to me that it would be murder to shoot him. At that age I was not squeamish about killing animals, but I had never shot an elephant and never wanted to. (Somehow it always seems worse to kill a large animal.) Besides, there was the beast's owner to be considered. Alive, the elephant was worth at least a hundred pounds; dead, he would only be worth the value of his tusks, five pounds, possibly. But I had got to act quickly. I turned to some experienced-looking Burmans who had been there when we arrived, and asked them how the elephant had been behaving. They all said the same thing: he took no notice of you if you left him alone, but he might charge if you went too close to him.

It was perfectly clear to me what I ought to do. I ought to walk up to within, say, twenty-five yards of the elephant and test his behavior. If he charged, I could shoot; if he took no notice of me, it would be safe to leave him until the mahout came back. But also I knew that I was going to do no such thing. I was a poor shot with a rifle and the ground was soft mud into which one would sink at every step. If the elephant charged and I missed him, I should have about as much chance as a toad under a steam-roller. But even then I was not thinking particularly of my own skin, only of the watchful yellow faces behind. For at that moment, with the crowd watching me, I was not afraid in the ordinary sense, as I would have been if I had been alone. A white man mustn't be frightened in front of ‘natives’; and so, in general, he isn't frightened. The sole thought in my mind was that if anything went wrong those two thousand Burmans would see me pursued, caught, trampled on and reduced to a grinning corpse like that Indian up the hill. And if that happened it was quite probable that some of them would laugh. That would never do.

There was only one alternative. I shoved the cartridges into the magazine and lay down on the road to get a better aim. The crowd grew very still, and a deep, low, happy sigh, as of people who see the theatre curtain go up at last, breathed from innumerable throats. They were going to have their bit of fun after all. The rifle was a beautiful German thing with cross-hair sights. I did not then know that in shooting an elephant one would shoot to cut an imaginary bar running from ear-hole to ear-hole. I ought, therefore, as the elephant was sideways on, to have aimed straight at his ear-hole, actually I aimed several inches in front of this, thinking the brain would be further forward.

When I pulled the trigger I did not hear the bang or feel the kick — one never does when a shot goes home — but I heard the devilish roar of glee that went up from the crowd. In that instant, in too short a time, one would have thought, even for the bullet to get there, a mysterious, terrible change had come over the elephant. He neither stirred nor fell, but every line of his body had altered. He looked suddenly stricken, shrunken, immensely old, as though the frightful impact of the bullet had paralysed him without knocking him down. At last, after what seemed a long time — it might have been five seconds, I dare say — he sagged flabbily to his knees. His mouth slobbered. An enormous senility seemed to have settled upon him. One could have imagined him thousands of years old. I fired again into the same spot. At the second shot he did not collapse but climbed with desperate slowness to his feet and stood weakly upright, with legs sagging and head drooping. I fired a third time. That was the shot that did for him. You could see the agony of it jolt his whole body and knock the last remnant of strength from his legs. But in falling he seemed for a moment to rise, for as his hind legs collapsed beneath him he seemed to tower upward like a huge rock toppling, his trunk reaching skyward like a tree. He trumpeted, for the first and only time. And then down he came, his belly towards me, with a crash that seemed to shake the ground even where I lay.

I got up. The Burmans were already racing past me across the mud. It was obvious that the elephant would never rise again, but he was not dead. He was breathing very rhythmically with long rattling gasps, his great mound of a side painfully rising and falling. His mouth was wide open — I could see far down into caverns of pale pink throat. I waited a long time for him to die, but his breathing did not weaken. Finally I fired my two remaining shots into the spot where I thought his heart must be. The thick blood welled out of him like red velvet, but still he did not die. His body did not even jerk when the shots hit him, the tortured breathing continued without a pause. He was dying, very slowly and in great agony, but in some world remote from me where not even a bullet could damage him further. I felt that I had got to put an end to that dreadful noise. It seemed dreadful to see the great beast Lying there, powerless to move and yet powerless to die, and not even to be able to finish him. I sent back for my small rifle and poured shot after shot into his heart and down his throat. They seemed to make no impression. The tortured gasps continued as steadily as the ticking of a clock.

In the end I could not stand it any longer and went away. I heard later that it took him half an hour to die. Burmans were bringing dash and baskets even before I left, and I was told they had stripped his body almost to the bones by the afternoon.

Afterwards, of course, there were endless discussions about the shooting of the elephant. The owner was furious, but he was only an Indian and could do nothing. Besides, legally I had done the right thing, for a mad elephant has to be killed, like a mad dog, if its owner fails to control it. Among the Europeans opinion was divided. The older men said I was right, the younger men said it was a damn shame to shoot an elephant for killing a coolie, because an elephant was worth more than any damn Coringhee coolie. And afterwards I was very glad that the coolie had been killed; it put me legally in the right and it gave me a sufficient pretext for shooting the elephant. I often wondered whether any of the others grasped that I had done it solely to avoid looking a fool.

**Stephen Crane. “The Open Boat”**

A Tale intended to be after the fact. Being the experience of four men from the sunk steamer "Commodore"

**I**

None of them knew the color of the sky. Their eyes glanced level, and were fastened upon the waves that swept toward them. These waves were of the hue of slate, save for the tops, which were of foaming white, and all of the men knew the colors of the sea. The horizon narrowed and widened, and dipped and rose, and at all times its edge was jagged with waves that seemed thrust up in points like rocks. Many a man ought to have a bath-tub larger than the boat which here rode upon the sea. These waves were most wrongfully and barbarously abrupt and tall, and each froth-top was a problem in small-boat navigation.

The cook squatted in the bottom and looked with both eyes at the six inches of gunwale which separated him from the ocean. His sleeves were rolled over his fat forearms, and the two flaps of his unbuttoned vest dangled as he bent to bail out the boat. Often he said: "Gawd! That was a narrow clip." As he remarked it he invariably gazed eastward over the broken sea.

The oiler, steering with one of the two oars in the boat, sometimes raised himself suddenly to keep clear of water that swirled in over the stern. It was a thin little oar and it seemed often ready to snap.

The correspondent, pulling at the other oar, watched the waves and wondered why he was there.

The injured captain, lying in the bow, was at this time buried in that profound dejection and indifference which comes, temporarily at least, to even the bravest and most enduring when, willy nilly, the firm fails, the army loses, the ship goes down. The mind of the master of a vessel is rooted deep in the timbers of her, though he commanded for a day or a decade, and this captain had on him the stern impression of a scene in the greys of dawn of seven turned faces, and later a stump of a top-mast with a white ball on it that slashed to and fro at the waves, went low and lower, and down. Thereafter there was something strange in his voice. Although steady, it was, deep with mourning, and of a quality beyond oration or tears.

"Keep 'er a little more south, Billie," said he.

"'A little more south,' sir," said the oiler in the stern.

A seat in this boat was not unlike a seat upon a bucking broncho, and by the same token, a broncho is not much smaller. The craft pranced and reared, and plunged like an animal. As each wave came, and she rose for it, she seemed like a horse making at a fence outrageously high. The manner of her scramble over these walls of water is a mystic thing, and, moreover, at the top of them were ordinarily these problems in white water, the foam racing down from the summit of each wave, requiring a new leap, and a leap from the air. Then, after scornfully bumping a crest, she would slide, and race, and splash down a long incline, and arrive bobbing and nodding in front of the next menace.

A singular disadvantage of the sea lies in the fact that after successfully surmounting one wave you discover that there is another behind it just as important and just as nervously anxious to do something effective in the way of swamping boats. In a ten-foot dingey one can get an idea of the resources of the sea in the line of waves that is not probable to the average experience which is never at sea in a dingey. As each slatey wall of water approached, it shut all else from the view of the men in the boat, and it was not difficult to imagine that this particular wave was the final outburst of the ocean, the last effort of the grim water. There was a terrible grace in the move of the waves, and they came in silence, save for the snarling of the crests.

In the wan light, the faces of the men must have been grey. Their eyes must have glinted in strange ways as they gazed steadily astern. Viewed from a balcony, the whole thing would doubtless have been weirdly picturesque. But the men in the boat had no time to see it, and if they had had leisure there were other things to occupy their minds. The sun swung steadily up the sky, and they knew it was broad day because the color of the sea changed from slate to emerald-green, streaked with amber lights, and the foam was like tumbling snow. The process of the breaking day was unknown to them. They were aware only of this effect upon the color of the waves that rolled toward them.

In disjointed sentences the cook and the correspondent argued as to the difference between a life-saving station and a house of refuge. The cook had said: "There's a house of refuge just north of the Mosquito Inlet Light, and as soon as they see us, they'll come off in their boat and pick us up."

"As soon as who see us?" said the correspondent.

"The crew," said the cook.

"Houses of refuge don't have crews," said the correspondent. "As I understand them, they are only places where clothes and grub are stored for the benefit of shipwrecked people. They don't carry crews."

"Oh, yes, they do," said the cook.

"No, they don't," said the correspondent.

"Well, we're not there yet, anyhow," said the oiler, in the stern.

"Well," said the cook, "perhaps it's not a house of refuge that I'm thinking of as being near Mosquito Inlet Light. Perhaps it's a life- saving station."

"We're not there yet," said the oiler, in the stern.

**II**

As the boat bounced from the top of each wave, the wind tore through the hair of the hatless men, and as the craft plopped her stern down again the spray splashed past them. The crest of each of these waves was a hill, from the top of which the men surveyed, for a moment, a broad tumultuous expanse, shining and wind-riven. It was probably splendid. It was probably glorious, this play of the free sea, wild with lights of emerald and white and amber.

"Bully good thing it's an on-shore wind," said the cook; "If not, where would we be? Wouldn't have a show."

"That's right," said the correspondent.

The busy oiler nodded his assent.

Then the captain, in the bow, chuckled in a way that expressed humor, contempt, tragedy, all in one. "Do you think We've got much of a show now, boys?" said he.

Whereupon the three were silent, save for a trifle of hemming and hawing. To express any particular optimism at this time they felt to be childish and stupid, but they all doubtless possessed this sense of the situation in their mind. A young man thinks doggedly at such times. On the other hand, the ethics of their condition was decidedly against any open suggestion of hopelessness. So they were silent.

"Oh, well," said the captain, soothing his children, "We'll get ashore all right."

But there was that in his tone which made them think, so the oiler quoth: "Yes! If this wind holds!"

The cook was bailing: "Yes! If we don't catch hell in the surf."

Canton flannel gulls flew near and far. Sometimes they sat down on the sea, near patches of brown seaweed that rolled on the waves with a movement like carpets on a line in a gale. The birds sat comfortably in groups, and they were envied by some in the dingey, for the wrath of the sea was no more to them than it was to a covey of prairie chickens a thousand miles inland. Often they came very close and stared at the men with black bead-like eyes. At these times they were uncanny and sinister in their unblinking scrutiny, and the men hooted angrily at them, telling them to be gone. One came, and evidently decided to alight on the top of the captain's head. The bird flew parallel to the boat and did not circle, but made short sidelong jumps in the air in chicken- fashion. His black eyes were wistfully fixed upon the captain's head. "Ugly brute," said the oiler to the bird. "You look as if you were made with a jack-knife." The cook and the correspondent swore darkly at the creature. The captain naturally wished to knock it away with the end of the heavy painter; but he did not dare do it, because anything resembling an emphatic gesture would have capsized this freighted boat, and so with his open hand, the captain gently and carefully waved the gull away. After it had been discouraged from the pursuit the captain breathed easier on account of his hair, and others breathed easier because the bird struck their minds at this time as being somehow grewsome and ominous.

In the meantime the oiler and the correspondent rowed And also they rowed.

They sat together in the same seat, and each rowed an oar. Then the oiler took both oars; then the correspondent took both oars; then the oiler; then the correspondent. They rowed and they rowed. The very ticklish part of the business was when the time came for the reclining one in the stern to take his turn at the oars. By the very last star of truth, it is easier to steal eggs from under a hen than it was to change seats in the dingey. First the man in the stern slid his hand along the thwart and moved with care, as if he were of Sevres. Then the man in the rowing seat slid his hand along the other thwart. It was all done with most extraordinary care. As the two sidled past each other, the whole party kept watchful eyes on the coming wave, and the captain cried: "Look out now! Steady there!"

The brown mats of seaweed that appeared from time to time were like islands, bits of earth. They were traveling, apparently, neither one way nor the other. They were, to all intents, stationary. They informed the men in the boat that it was making progress slowly toward the land.

The captain, rearing cautiously in the bow, after the dingey soared on a great swell, said that he had seen the light-house at Mosquito Inlet. Presently the cook remarked that he had seen it. The correspondent was at the oars then, and for some reason he too wished to look at the lighthouse, but his back was toward the far shore and the waves were important, and for some time he could not seize an opportunity to turn his head. But at last there came a wave more gentle than the others, and when at the crest of it he swiftly scoured the western horizon.

"See it?" said the captain.

"No," said the correspondent slowly, "I didn't see anything."

"Look again," said the captain. He pointed. "It's exactly in that direction."

At the top of another wave, the correspondent did as he was bid, and this time his eyes chanced on a small still thing on the edge of the swaying horizon. It was precisely like the point of a pin. It took an anxious eye to find a light house so tiny.

"Think we'll make it, captain?"

"If this wind holds and the boat don't swamp, we can't do much else," said the captain.

The little boat, lifted by each towering sea, and splashed viciously by the crests, made progress that in the absence of seaweed was not apparent to those in her. She seemed just a wee thing wallowing, miraculously top-up, at the mercy of five oceans. Occasionally, a great spread of water, like white flames, swarmed into her.

"Bail her, cook," said the captain serenely.

"All right, captain," said the cheerful cook.

**III**

It would be difficult to describe the subtle brotherhood of men that was here established on the seas. No one said that it was so. No one mentioned it. But it dwelt in the boat, and each man felt it warm him. They were a captain, an oiler, a cook, and a correspondent, and they were friends, friends in a more curiously iron-bound degree than may be common. The hurt captain, lying against the water-jar in the bow, spoke always in a low voice and calmly, but he could never command a more ready and swiftly obedient crew than the motley three of the dingey. It was more than a mere recognition of what was best for the common safety. There was surely in it a quality that was personal and heartfelt. And after this devotion to the commander of the boat there was this comradeship that the correspondent, for instance, who had been taught to be cynical of men, knew even at the time was the best experience of his life. But no one said that it was so. No one mentioned it.

"I wish we had a sail," remarked the captain. "We might try my overcoat on the end of an oar and give you two boys a chance to rest." So the cook and the correspondent held the mast and spread wide the overcoat. The oiler steered, and the little boat made good way with her new rig. Sometimes the oiler had to scull sharply to keep a sea from breaking into the boat, but otherwise sailing was a success.

Meanwhile the lighthouse had been growing slowly larger. It had now almost assumed color, and appeared like a little grey shadow on the sky. The man at the oars could not be prevented from turning his head rather often to try for a glimpse of this little grey shadow.

At last, from the top of each wave the men in the tossing boat could see land. Even as the lighthouse was an upright shadow on the sky, this land seemed but a long black shadow on the sea. It certainly was thinner than paper. "We must be about opposite New Smyrna," said the cook, who had coasted this shore often in schooners. "Captain, by the way, I believe they abandoned that life-saving station there about a year ago."

"Did they?" said the captain.

The wind slowly died away. The cook and the correspondent were not now obliged to slave in order to hold high the oar. But the waves continued their old impetuous swooping at the dingey, and the little craft, no longer under way, struggled woundily over them. The oiler or the correspondent took the oars again.

Shipwrecks are \_a propos\_ of nothing. If men could only train for them and have them occur when the men had reached pink condition, there would be less drowning at sea. Of the four in the dingey none had slept any time worth mentioning for two days and two nights previous to embarking in the dingey, and in the excitement of clambering about the deck of a foundering ship they had also forgotten to eat heartily.

For these reasons, and for others, neither the oiler nor the correspondent was fond of rowing at this time. The correspondent wondered ingenuously how in the name of all that was sane could there be people who thought it amusing to row a boat. It was not an amusement; it was a diabolical punishment, and even a genius of mental aberrations could never conclude that it was anything but a horror to the muscles and a crime against the back. He mentioned to the boat in general how the amusement of rowing struck him, and the weary-faced oiler smiled in full sympathy. Previously to the foundering, by the way, the oiler had worked double-watch in the engine-room of the ship.

"Take her easy, now, boys," said the captain. "Don't spend yourselves. If we have to run a surf you'll need all your strength, because we'll sure have to swim for it. Take your time."

Slowly the land arose from the sea. From a black line it became a line of black and a line of white, trees and sand. Finally, the captain said that he could make out a house on the shore. "That's the house of refuge, sure," said the cook. "They'll see us before long, and come out after us."

The distant lighthouse reared high. "The keeper ought to be able to make us out now, if he's looking through a glass," said the captain. "He'll notify the life-saving people."

"None of those other boats could have got ashore to give word of the wreck," said the oiler, in a low voice. "Else the lifeboat would be out hunting us."

Slowly and beautifully the land loomed out of the sea. The wind came again. It had veered from the north-east to the south-east. Finally, a new sound struck the ears of the men in the boat. It was the low thunder of the surf on the shore. "We'll never be able to make the lighthouse now," said the captain. "Swing her head a little more north, Billie," said he.

"'A little more north,' sir," said the oiler.

Whereupon the little boat turned her nose once more down the wind, and all but the oarsman watched the shore grow. Under the influence of this expansion doubt and direful apprehension was leaving the minds of the men. The management of the boat was still most absorbing, but it could not prevent a quiet cheerfulness. In an hour, perhaps, they would be ashore.

Their backbones had become thoroughly used to balancing in the boat, and they now rode this wild colt of a dingey like circus men. The correspondent thought that he had been drenched to the skin, but happening to feel in the top pocket of his coat, he found therein eight cigars. Four of them were soaked with sea-water; four were perfectly scathless. After a search, somebody produced three dry matches, and thereupon the four waifs rode impudently in their little boat, and with an assurance of an impending rescue shining in their eyes, puffed at the big cigars and judged well and ill of all men. Everybody took a drink of water.

**IV**

"Cook," remarked the captain, "there don't seem to be any signs of life about your house of refuge."

"No," replied the cook. "Funny they don't see us!"

A broad stretch of lowly coast lay before the eyes of the men. It was of dunes topped with dark vegetation. The roar of the surf was plain, and sometimes they could see the white lip of a wave as it spun up the beach. A tiny house was blocked out black upon the sky. Southward, the slim lighthouse lifted its little grey length.

Tide, wind, and waves were swinging the dingey northward. "Funny they don't see us," said the men.

The surf's roar was here dulled, but its tone was, nevertheless, thunderous and mighty. As the boat swam over the great rollers, the men sat listening to this roar. "We'll swamp sure," said everybody.

It is fair to say here that there was not a life-saving station within twenty miles in either direction, but the men did not know this fact, and in consequence they made dark and opprobrious remarks concerning the eyesight of the nation's life-savers. Four scowling men sat in the dingey and surpassed records in the invention of epithets.

"Funny they don't see us."

The lightheartedness of a former time had completely faded. To their sharpened minds it was easy to conjure pictures of all kinds of incompetency and blindness and, indeed, cowardice. There was the shore of the populous land, and it was bitter and bitter to them that from it came no sign.

"Well," said the captain, ultimately, "I suppose we'll have to make a try for ourselves. If we stay out here too long, we'll none of us have strength left to swim after the boat swamps."

And so the oiler, who was at the oars, turned the boat straight for the shore. There was a sudden tightening of muscle. There was some thinking.

"If we don't all get ashore--" said the captain. "If we don't all get ashore, I suppose you fellows know where to send news of my finish?"

They then briefly exchanged some addresses and admonitions. As for the reflections of the men, there was a great deal of rage in them. Perchance they might be formulated thus: "If I am going to be drowned-- if I am going to be drowned--if I am going to be drowned, why, in the name of the seven mad gods who rule the sea, was I allowed to come thus far and contemplate sand and trees? Was I brought here merely to have my nose dragged away as I was about to nibble the sacred cheese of life? It is preposterous. If this old ninny-woman, Fate, cannot do better than this, she should be deprived of the management of men's fortunes. She is an old hen who knows not her intention. If she has decided to drown me, why did she not do it in the beginning and save me all this trouble? The whole affair is absurd.... But no, she cannot mean to drown me. She dare not drown me. She cannot drown me. Not after all this work." Afterward the man might have had an impulse to shake his fist at the clouds: "Just you drown me, now, and then hear what I call you!"

The billows that came at this time were more formidable. They seemed always just about to break and roll over the little boat in a turmoil of foam. There was a preparatory and long growl in the speech of them. No mind unused to the sea would have concluded that the dingey could ascend these sheer heights in time. The shore was still afar. The oiler was a wily surfman. "Boys," he said swiftly, "she won't live three minutes more, and we're too far out to swim. Shall I take her to sea again, captain?"

"Yes! Go ahead!" said the captain.

This oiler, by a series of quick miracles, and fast and steady oarsmanship, turned the boat in the middle of the surf and took her safely to sea again.

There was a considerable silence as the boat bumped over the furrowed sea to deeper water. Then somebody in gloom spoke. "Well, anyhow, they must have seen us from the shore by now."

The gulls went in slanting flight up the wind toward the grey desolate east. A squall, marked by dingy clouds, and clouds brick-red, like smoke from a burning building, appeared from the south-east.

"What do you think of those life-saving people? Ain't they peaches?'

"Funny they haven't seen us."

"Maybe they think we're out here for sport! Maybe they think we're fishin'. Maybe they think we're damned fools."

It was a long afternoon. A changed tide tried to force them southward, but the wind and wave said northward. Far ahead, where coast-line, sea, and sky formed their mighty angle, there were little dots which seemed to indicate a city on the shore.

"St. Augustine?"

The captain shook his head. "Too near Mosquito Inlet."

And the oiler rowed, and then the correspondent rowed. Then the oiler rowed. It was a weary business. The human back can become the seat of more aches and pains than are registered in books for the composite anatomy of a regiment. It is a limited area, but it can become the theatre of innumerable muscular conflicts, tangles, wrenches, knots, and other comforts.

"Did you ever like to row, Billie?" asked the correspondent.

"No," said the oiler. "Hang it!"

When one exchanged the rowing-seat for a place in the bottom of the boat, he suffered a bodily depression that caused him to be careless of everything save an obligation to wiggle one finger. There was cold sea- water swashing to and fro in the boat, and he lay in it. His head, pillowed on a thwart, was within an inch of the swirl of a wave crest, and sometimes a particularly obstreperous sea came in-board and drenched him once more. But these matters did not annoy him. It is almost certain that if the boat had capsized he would have tumbled comfortably out upon the ocean as if he felt sure that it was a great soft mattress.

"Look! There's a man on the shore!"

"Where?"

"There! See 'im? See 'im?"

"Yes, sure! He's walking along."

"Now he's stopped. Look! He's facing us!"

"He's waving at us!"

"So he is! By thunder!"

"Ah, now we're all right! Now we're all right! There'll be a boat out here for us in half-an-hour."

"He's going on. He's running. He's going up to that house there."

The remote beach seemed lower than the sea, and it required a searching glance to discern the little black figure. The captain saw a floating stick and they rowed to it. A bath-towel was by some weird chance in the boat, and, tying this on the stick, the captain waved it. The oarsman did not dare turn his head, so he was obliged to ask questions.

"What's he doing now?"

"He's standing still again. He's looking, I think.... There he goes again. Toward the house.... Now he's stopped again."

"Is he waving at us?"

"No, not now! he was, though."

"Look! There comes another man!"

"He's running."

"Look at him go, would you."

"Why, he's on a bicycle. Now he's met the other man. They're both waving at us. Look!"

"There comes something up the beach."

"What the devil is that thing?"

"Why it looks like a boat."

"Why, certainly it's a boat."

"No, it's on wheels."

"Yes, so it is. Well, that must be the life-boat. They drag them along shore on a wagon."

"That's the life-boat, sure."

"No, by ----, it's--it's an omnibus."

"I tell you it's a life-boat."

"It is not! It's an omnibus. I can see it plain. See? One of these big hotel omnibuses."

"By thunder, you're right. It's an omnibus, sure as fate. What do you suppose they are doing with an omnibus? Maybe they are going around collecting the life-crew, hey?"

"That's it, likely. Look! There's a fellow waving a little black flag. He's standing on the steps of the omnibus. There come those other two fellows. Now they're all talking together. Look at the fellow with the flag. Maybe he ain't waving it."

"That ain't a flag, is it? That's his coat. Why, certainly, that's his coat."

"So it is. It's his coat. He's taken it off and is waving it around his head. But would you look at him swing it."

"Oh, say, there isn't any life-saving station there. That's just a winter resort hotel omnibus that has brought over some of the boarders to see us drown."

"What's that idiot with the coat mean? What's he signaling, anyhow?"

"It looks as if he were trying to tell us to go north. There must be a life-saving station up there."

"No! He thinks we're fishing. Just giving us a merry hand. See? Ah, there, Willie!"

"Well, I wish I could make something out of those signals. What do you suppose he means?"

"He don't mean anything. He's just playing."

"Well, if he'd just signal us to try the surf again, or to go to sea and wait, or go north, or go south, or go to hell--there would be some reason in it. But look at him. He just stands there and keeps his coat revolving like a wheel. The ass!"

"There come more people."

"Now there's quite a mob. Look! Isn't that a boat?"

"Where? Oh, I see where you mean. No, that's no boat."

"That fellow is still waving his coat."

"He must think we like to see him do that. Why don't he quit it? It don't mean anything."

"I don't know. I think he is trying to make us go north. It must be that there's a life-saving station there somewhere."

"Say, he ain't tired yet. Look at 'im wave."

"Wonder how long he can keep that up. He's been revolving his coat ever since he caught sight of us. He's an idiot. Why aren't they getting men to bring a boat out? A fishing boat--one of those big yawls--could come out here all right. Why don't he do something?"

"Oh, it's all right, now."

"They'll have a boat out here for us in less than no time, now that they've seen us."

A faint yellow tone came into the sky over the low land. The shadows on the sea slowly deepened. The wind bore coldness with it, and the men began to shiver.

"Holy smoke!" said one, allowing his voice to express his impious mood, "if we keep on monkeying out here! If we've got to flounder out here all night!"

"Oh, we'll never have to stay here all night! Don't you worry. They've seen us now, and it won't be long before they'll come chasing out after us."

The shore grew dusky. The man waving a coat blended gradually into this gloom, and it swallowed in the same manner the omnibus and the group of people. The spray, when it dashed uproariously over the side, made the voyagers shrink and swear like men who were being branded.

"I'd like to catch the chump who waved the coat. I feel like soaking him one, just for luck."

"Why? What did he do?"

"Oh, nothing, but then he seemed so damned cheerful."

In the meantime the oiler rowed, and then the correspondent rowed, and then the oiler rowed. Grey-faced and bowed forward, they mechanically, turn by turn, plied the leaden oars. The form of the lighthouse had vanished from the southern horizon, but finally a pale star appeared, just lifting from the sea. The streaked saffron in the west passed before the all-merging darkness, and the sea to the east was black. The land had vanished, and was expressed only by the low and drear thunder of the surf.

"If I am going to be drowned--if I am going to be drowned--if I am going to be drowned, why, in the name of the seven mad gods who rule the sea, was I allowed to come thus far and contemplate sand and trees? Was I brought here merely to have my nose dragged away as I was about to nibble the sacred cheese of life?"

The patient captain, drooped over the water-jar, was sometimes obliged to speak to the oarsman.

"Keep her head up! Keep her head up!"

"'Keep her head up,' sir." The voices were weary and low.

This was surely a quiet evening. All save the oarsman lay heavily and listlessly in the boat's bottom. As for him, his eyes were just capable of noting the tall black waves that swept forward in a most sinister silence, save for an occasional subdued growl of a crest.

The cook's head was on a thwart, and he looked without interest at the water under his nose. He was deep in other scenes. Finally he spoke. "Billie," he murmured, dreamfully, "what kind of pie do you like best?"

**V**

"Pie," said the oiler and the correspondent, agitatedly. "Don't talk about those things, blast you!"

"Well," said the cook, "I was just thinking about ham sandwiches, and--"

A night on the sea in an open boat is a long night. As darkness settled finally, the shine of the light, lifting from the sea in the south, changed to full gold. On the northern horizon a new light appeared, a small bluish gleam on the edge of the waters. These two lights were the furniture of the world. Otherwise there was nothing but waves.

Two men huddled in the stern, and distances were so magnificent in the dingey that the rower was enabled to keep his feet partly warmed by thrusting them under his companions. Their legs indeed extended far under the rowing-seat until they touched the feet of the captain forward. Sometimes, despite the efforts of the tired oarsman, a wave came piling into the boat, an icy wave of the night, and the chilling water soaked them anew. They would twist their bodies for a moment and groan, and sleep the dead sleep once more, while the water in the boat gurgled about them as the craft rocked.

The plan of the oiler and the correspondent was for one to row until he lost the ability, and then arouse the other from his sea-water couch in the bottom of the boat.

The oiler plied the oars until his head drooped forward, and the overpowering sleep blinded him. And he rowed yet afterward. Then he touched a man in the bottom of the boat, and called his name. "Will you spell me for a little while?" he said, meekly.

"Sure, Billie," said the correspondent, awakening and dragging himself to a sitting position. They exchanged places carefully, and the oiler, cuddling down in the sea-water at the cook's side, seemed to go to sleep instantly.

The particular violence of the sea had ceased. The waves came without snarling. The obligation of the man at the oars was to keep the boat headed so that the tilt of the rollers would not capsize her, and to preserve her from filling when the crests rushed past. The black waves were silent and hard to be seen in the darkness. Often one was almost upon the boat before the oarsman was aware.

In a low voice the correspondent addressed the captain. He was not sure that the captain was awake, although this iron man seemed to be always awake. "Captain, shall I keep her making for that light north, sir?"

The same steady voice answered him. "Yes. Keep it about two points off the port bow."

The cook had tied a life-belt around himself in order to get even the warmth which this clumsy cork contrivance could donate, and he seemed almost stove-like when a rower, whose teeth invariably chattered wildly as soon as he ceased his labor, dropped down to sleep.

The correspondent, as he rowed, looked down at the two men sleeping under-foot. The cook's arm was around the oiler's shoulders, and, with their fragmentary clothing and haggard faces, they were the babes of the sea, a grotesque rendering of the old babes in the wood.

Later he must have grown stupid at his work, for suddenly there was a growling of water, and a crest came with a roar and a swash into the boat, and it was a wonder that it did not set the cook afloat in his life-belt. The cook continued to sleep, but the oiler sat up, blinking his eyes and shaking with the new cold.

"Oh, I'm awful sorry, Billie," said the correspondent contritely.

"That's all right, old boy," said the oiler, and lay down again and was asleep.

Presently it seemed that even the captain dozed, and the correspondent thought that he was the one man afloat on all the oceans. The wind had a voice as it came over the waves, and it was sadder than the end.

There was a long, loud swishing astern of the boat, and a gleaming trail of phosphorescence, like blue flame, was furrowed on the black waters. It might have been made by a monstrous knife.

Then there came a stillness, while the correspondent breathed with the open mouth and looked at the sea.

Suddenly there was another swish and another long flash of bluish light, and this time it was alongside the boat, and might almost have been reached with an oar. The correspondent saw an enormous fin speed like a shadow through the water, hurling the crystalline spray and leaving the long glowing trail.

The correspondent looked over his shoulder at the captain. His face was hidden, and he seemed to be asleep. He looked at the babes of the sea. They certainly were asleep. So, being bereft of sympathy, he leaned a little way to one side and swore softly into the sea.

But the thing did not then leave the vicinity of the boat. Ahead or astern, on one side or the other, at intervals long or short, fled the long sparkling streak, and there was to be heard the whirroo of the dark fin. The speed and power of the thing was greatly to be admired. It cut the water like a gigantic and keen projectile.

The presence of this biding thing did not affect the man with the same horror that it would if he had been a picnicker. He simply looked at the sea dully and swore in an undertone.

Nevertheless, it is true that he did not wish to be alone. He wished one of his companions to awaken by chance and keep him company with it. But the captain hung motionless over the water-jar, and the oiler and the cook in the bottom of the boat were plunged in slumber.

**VI**

"If I am going to be drowned--if I am going to be drowned--if I am going to be drowned, why, in the name of the seven mad gods who rule the sea, was I allowed to come thus far and contemplate sand and trees?"

During this dismal night, it may be remarked that a man would conclude that it was really the intention of the seven mad gods to drown him, despite the abominable injustice of it. For it was certainly an abominable injustice to drown a man who had worked so hard, so hard. The man felt it would be a crime most unnatural. Other people had drowned at sea since galleys swarmed with painted sails, but still--

When it occurs to a man that nature does not regard him as important, and that she feels she would not maim the universe by disposing of him, he at first wishes to throw bricks at the temple, and he hates deeply the fact that there are no brick and no temples. Any visible expression of nature would surely be pelleted with his jeers.

Then, if there be no tangible thing to hoot he feels, perhaps, the desire to confront a personification and indulge in pleas, bowed to one knee, and with hands supplicant, saying: "Yes, but I love myself."

A high cold star on a winter's night is the word he feels that she says to him. Thereafter he knows the pathos of his situation.

The men in the dingey had not discussed these matters, but each had, no doubt, reflected upon them in silence and according to his mind. There was seldom any expression upon their faces save the general one of complete weariness. Speech was devoted to the business of the boat.

To chime the notes of his emotion, a verse mysteriously entered the correspondent's head. He had even forgotten that he had forgotten this verse, but it suddenly was in his mind.

"A soldier of the Legion lay dying in Algiers,

There was a lack of woman's nursing, there was dearth of

woman's tears;

But a comrade stood beside him, and he took that comrade's hand,

And he said: 'I shall never see my own, my native land.'"

In his childhood, the correspondent had been made acquainted with the fact that a soldier of the Legion lay dying in Algiers, but he had never regarded the fact as important. Myriads of his school-fellows had informed him of the soldier's plight, but the dinning had naturally ended by making him perfectly indifferent. He had never considered it his affair that a soldier of the Legion lay dying in Algiers, nor had it appeared to him as a matter for sorrow. It was less to him than the breaking of a pencil's point.

Now, however, it quaintly came to him as a human, living thing. It was no longer merely a picture of a few throes in the breast of a poet, meanwhile drinking tea and warming his feet at the grate; it was an actuality--stern, mournful, and fine.

The correspondent plainly saw the soldier. He lay on the sand with his feet out straight and still. While his pale left hand was upon his chest in an attempt to thwart the going of his life, the blood came between his fingers. In the far Algerian distance, a city of low square forms was set against a sky that was faint with the last sunset hues. The correspondent, plying the oars and dreaming of the slow and slower movements of the lips of the soldier, was moved by a profound and perfectly impersonal comprehension. He was sorry for the soldier of the Legion who lay dying in Algiers.

The thing which had followed the boat and waited, had evidently grown bored at the delay. There was no longer to be heard the slash of the cut-water, and there was no longer the flame of the long trail. The light in the north still glimmered, but it was apparently no nearer to the boat. Sometimes the boom of the surf rang in the correspondent's ears, and he turned the craft seaward then and rowed harder. Southward, some one had evidently built a watch-fire on the beach. It was too low and too far to be seen, but it made a shimmering, roseate reflection upon the bluff back of it, and this could be discerned from the boat. The wind came stronger, and sometimes a wave suddenly raged out like a mountain-cat, and there was to be seen the sheen and sparkle of a broken crest.

The captain, in the bow, moved on his water-jar and sat erect. "Pretty long night," he observed to the correspondent. He looked at the shore. "Those life-saving people take their time."

"Did you see that shark playing around?"

"Yes, I saw him. He was a big fellow, all right."

"Wish I had known you were awake."

Later the correspondent spoke into the bottom of the boat.

"Billie!" There was a slow and gradual disentanglement. "Billie, will you spell me?"

"Sure," said the oiler.

As soon as the correspondent touched the cold comfortable sea-water in the bottom of the boat, and had huddled close to the cook's life-belt he was deep in sleep, despite the fact that his teeth played all the popular airs. This sleep was so good to him that it was but a moment before he heard a voice call his name in a tone that demonstrated the last stages of exhaustion. "Will you spell me?"

"Sure, Billie."

The light in the north had mysteriously vanished, but the correspondent took his course from the wide-awake captain.

Later in the night they took the boat farther out to sea, and the captain directed the cook to take one oar at the stern and keep the boat facing the seas. He was to call out if he should hear the thunder of the surf. This plan enabled the oiler and the correspondent to get respite together. "We'll give those boys a chance to get into shape again," said the captain. They curled down and, after a few preliminary chatterings and trembles, slept once more the dead sleep. Neither knew they had bequeathed to the cook the company of another shark, or perhaps the same shark.

As the boat caroused on the waves, spray occasionally bumped over the side and gave them a fresh soaking, but this had no power to break their repose. The ominous slash of the wind and the water affected them as it would have affected mummies.

"Boys," said the cook, with the notes of every reluctance in his voice, "she's drifted in pretty close. I guess one of you had better take her to sea again." The correspondent, aroused, heard the crash of the toppled crests.

As he was rowing, the captain gave him some whisky-and-water, and this steadied the chills out of him. "If I ever get ashore and anybody shows me even a photograph of an oar--"

At last there was a short conversation.

"Billie.... Billie, will you spell me?"

"Sure," said the oiler.

**VII**

When the correspondent again opened his eyes, the sea and the sky were each of the grey hue of the dawning. Later, carmine and gold was painted upon the waters. The morning appeared finally, in its splendor, with a sky of pure blue, and the sunlight flamed on the tips of the waves.

On the distant dunes were set many little black cottages, and a tall white windmill reared above them. No man, nor dog, nor bicycle appeared on the beach. The cottages might have formed a deserted village.

The voyagers scanned the shore. A conference was held in the boat. "Well," said the captain, "if no help is coming we might better try a run through the surf right away. If we stay out here much longer we will be too weak to do anything for ourselves at all." The others silently acquiesced in this reasoning. The boat was headed for the beach. The correspondent wondered if none ever ascended the tall wind-tower, and if then they never looked seaward. This tower was a giant, standing with its back to the plight of the ants. It represented in a degree, to the correspondent, the serenity of nature amid the struggles of the individual--nature in the wind, and nature in the vision of men. She did not seem cruel to him then, nor beneficent, nor treacherous, nor wise. But she was indifferent, flatly indifferent. It is, perhaps, plausible that a man in this situation, impressed with the unconcern of the universe, should see the innumerable flaws of his life, and have them taste wickedly in his mind and wish for another chance. A distinction between right and wrong seems absurdly clear to him, then, in this new ignorance of the grave-edge, and he understands that if he were given another opportunity he would mend his conduct and his words, and be better and brighter during an introduction or at a tea.

"Now, boys," said the captain, "she is going to swamp, sure. All we can do is to work her in as far as possible, and then when she swamps, pile out and scramble for the beach. Keep cool now, and don't jump until she swamps sure."

The oiler took the oars. Over his shoulders he scanned the surf. "Captain," he said, "I think I'd better bring her about, and keep her head-on to the seas and back her in."

"All right, Billie," said the captain. "Back her in." The oiler swung the boat then and, seated in the stern, the cook and the correspondent were obliged to look over their shoulders to contemplate the lonely and indifferent shore.

The monstrous in-shore rollers heaved the boat high until the men were again enabled to see the white sheets of water scudding up the slanted beach. "We won't get in very close," said the captain. Each time a man could wrest his attention from the rollers, he turned his glance toward the shore, and in the expression of the eyes during this contemplation there was a singular quality. The correspondent, observing the others, knew that they were not afraid, but the full meaning of their glances was shrouded.

As for himself, he was too tired to grapple fundamentally with the fact. He tried to coerce his mind into thinking of it, but the mind was dominated at this time by the muscles, and the muscles said they did not care. It merely occurred to him that if he should drown it would be a shame.

There were no hurried words, no pallor, no plain agitation. The men simply looked at the shore. "Now, remember to get well clear of the boat when you jump," said the captain.

Seaward the crest of a roller suddenly fell with a thunderous crash, and the long white comber came roaring down upon the boat.

"Steady now," said the captain. The men were silent. They turned their eyes from the shore to the comber and waited. The boat slid up the incline, leaped at the furious top, bounced over it, and swung down the long back of the wave. Some water had been shipped and the cook bailed it out.

But the next crest crashed also. The tumbling, boiling flood of white water caught the boat and whirled it almost perpendicular. Water swarmed in from all sides. The correspondent had his hands on the gunwale at this time, and when the water entered at that place he swiftly withdrew his fingers, as if he objected to wetting them.

The little boat, drunken with this weight of water, reeled and snuggled deeper into the sea.

"Bail her out, cook! Bail her out," said the captain.

"All right, captain," said the cook.

"Now, boys, the next one will do for us, sure," said the oiler. "Mind to jump clear of the boat."

The third wave moved forward, huge, furious, implacable. It fairly swallowed the dingey, and almost simultaneously the men tumbled into the sea. A piece of lifebelt had lain in the bottom of the boat, and as the correspondent went overboard he held this to his chest with his left hand.

The January water was icy, and he reflected immediately that it was colder than he had expected to find it on the coast of Florida. This appeared to his dazed mind as a fact important enough to be noted at the time. The coldness of the water was sad; it was tragic. This fact was somehow so mixed and confused with his opinion of his own situation that it seemed almost a proper reason for tears. The water was cold.

When he came to the surface he was conscious of little but the noisy water. Afterward he saw his companions in the sea. The oiler was ahead in the race. He was swimming strongly and rapidly. Off to the correspondent's left, the cook's great white and corked back bulged out of the water, and in the rear the captain was hanging with his one good hand to the keel of the overturned dingey.

There is a certain immovable quality to a shore, and the correspondent wondered at it amid the confusion of the sea.

It seemed also very attractive, but the correspondent knew that it was a long journey, and he paddled leisurely. The piece of life-preserver lay under him, and sometimes he whirled down the incline of a wave as if he were on a handsled.

But finally he arrived at a place in the sea where travel was beset with difficulty. He did not pause swimming to inquire what manner of current had caught him, but there his progress ceased. The shore was set before him like a bit of scenery on a stage, and he looked at it and understood with his eyes each detail of it.

As the cook passed, much farther to the left, the captain was calling to him, "Turn over on your back, cook! Turn over on your back and use the oar."

"All right, sir." The cook turned on his back, and, paddling with an oar, went ahead as if he were a canoe.

Presently the boat also passed to the left of the correspondent with the captain clinging with one hand to the keel. He would have appeared like a man raising himself to look over a board fence, if it were not for the extraordinary gymnastics of the boat. The correspondent marvelled that the captain could still hold to it.

They passed on, nearer to shore--the oiler, the cook, the captain--and following them went the water-jar, bouncing gaily over the seas.

The correspondent remained in the grip of this strange new enemy--a current. The shore, with its white slope of sand and its green bluff, topped with little silent cottages, was spread like a picture before him. It was very near to him then, but he was impressed as one who in a gallery looks at a scene from Brittany or Holland.

He thought: "I am going to drown? Can it be possible Can it be possible? Can it be possible?" Perhaps an individual must consider his own death to be the final phenomenon of nature.

But later a wave perhaps whirled him out of this small, deadly current, for he found suddenly that he could again make progress toward the shore. Later still, he was aware that the captain, clinging with one hand to the keel of the dingey, had his face turned away from the shore and toward him, and was calling his name. "Come to the boat! Come to the boat!"

In his struggle to reach the captain and the boat, he reflected that when one gets properly wearied, drowning must really be a comfortable arrangement, a cessation of hostilities accompanied by a large degree of relief, and he was glad of it, for the main thing in his mind for some months had been horror of the temporary agony. He did not wish to be hurt.

Presently he saw a man running along the shore. He was undressing with most remarkable speed. Coat, trousers, shirt, everything flew magically off him.

"Come to the boat," called the captain.

"All right, captain." As the correspondent paddled, he saw the captain let himself down to bottom and leave the boat. Then the correspondent performed his one little marvel of the voyage. A large wave caught him and flung him with ease and supreme speed completely over the boat and far beyond it. It struck him even then as an event in gymnastics, and a true miracle of the sea. An over-turned boat in the surf is not a plaything to a swimming man.

The correspondent arrived in water that reached only to his waist, but his condition did not enable him to stand for more than a moment. Each wave knocked him into a heap, and the under-tow pulled at him.

Then he saw the man who had been running and undressing, and undressing and running, come bounding into the water. He dragged ashore the cook, and then waded towards the captain, but the captain waved him away, and sent him to the correspondent. He was naked, naked as a tree in winter, but a halo was about his head, and he shone like a saint. He gave a strong pull, and a long drag, and a bully heave at the correspondent's hand. The correspondent, schooled in the minor formulae, said: "Thanks, old man." But suddenly the man cried: "What's that?" He pointed a swift finger. The correspondent said: "Go."

In the shallows, face downward, lay the oiler. His forehead touched sand that was periodically, between each wave, clear of the sea.

The correspondent did not know all that transpired afterward. When he achieved safe ground he fell, striking the sand with each particular part of his body. It was as if he had dropped from a roof, but the thud was grateful to him.

It seems that instantly the beach was populated with men with blankets, clothes, and flasks, and women with coffeepots and all the remedies sacred to their minds. The welcome of the land to the men from the sea was warm and generous, but a still and dripping shape was carried slowly up the beach, and the land's welcome for it could only be the different and sinister hospitality of the grave.

When it came night, the white waves paced to and fro in the moonlight, and the wind brought the sound of the great sea's voice to the men on shore, and they felt that they could then be interpreters.

**Mark Twain. “The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County“**

In compliance with the request of a friend of mine, who wrote me from the East, I called on good-natured, garrulous old Simon Wheeler, and inquired after my friend's friend, Leonidas W. Smiley, as requested to do, and I hereunto append the result. I have a lurking suspicion that Leonidas W. Smiley is a myth; that my friend never knew such a personage; and that he only conjectured that, if I asked old Wheeler about him, it would remind him of his infamous Jim Smiley, and he would go to work and bore me nearly to death with some infernal reminiscence of him as long and tedious as it should be useless to me. If that was the design, it certainly succeeded.

I found Simon Wheeler dozing comfortably by the bar-room stove of the old, dilapidated tavern in the ancient mining camp of Angel's, and I noticed that he was fat and bald-headed, and had an expression of winning gentleness and simplicity upon his tranquil countenance. He roused up and gave me good-day. I told him a friend of mine had commissioned me to make some inquiries about a cherished companion of his boyhood named Leonidas W. Smiley Rev. Leonidas W. Smiley a young minister of the Gospel, who he had heard was at one time a resident of Angel's Camp. I added that, if Mr. Wheeler could tell me any thing about this Rev. Leonidas W. Smiley, I would feel under many obligations to him.

Simon Wheeler backed me into a corner and blockaded me there with his chair, and then sat me down and reeled off the monotonous narrative which follows this paragraph. He never smiled, he never frowned, he never changed his voice from the gentle-flowing key to which he tuned the initial sentence, he never betrayed the slightest suspicion of enthusiasm; but all through the interminable narrative there ran a vein of impressive earnestness and sincerity, which showed me plainly that, so far from his imagining that there was any thing ridiculous or funny about his story, he regarded it as a really important matter, and admired its two heroes as men of transcendent genius in finesse. To me, the spectacle of a man drifting serenely along through such a queer yarn without ever smiling, was exquisitely absurd. As I said before, I asked him to tell me what he knew of Rev. Leonidas W. Smiley, and he replied as follows. I let him go on in his own way, and never interrupted him once:

There was a feller here once by the name of Jim Smiley, in the winter of '49 or may be it was the spring of '50 I don't recollect exactly, somehow, though what makes me think it was one or the other is because I remember the big flume wasn't finished when he first came to the camp; but any way, he was the curiosest man about always betting on any thing that turned up you ever see, if he could get any body to bet on the other side; and if he couldn't, he'd change sides. Any way that suited the other man would suit him any way just so's he got a bet, he was satisfied. But still he was lucky, uncommon lucky; he most always come out winner. He was always ready and laying for a chance; there couldn't be no solittry thing mentioned but that feller'd offer to bet on it, and -take any side you please, as I was just telling you. If there was a horse-race, you'd find him flush, or you'd find him busted at the end of it; if there was a dog-fight, he'd bet on it; if there was a cat-fight, he'd bet on it; if there was a chicken-fight, he'd bet on it; why, if there was two birds setting on a fence, he would bet you which one would fly first; or if there was a camp-meeting, he would be there reg'lar, to bet on Parson Walker, which he judged to be the best exhorter about here, and so he was, too, and a good man. If he even seen a straddle-bug start to go anywheres, he would bet you how long it would take him to get wherever he was going to, and if you took him up, he would foller that straddle-bug to Mexico but what he would find out where he was bound for and how long he was on the road. Lots of the boys here has seen that Smiley, and can tell you about him. Why, it never made no difference to him he would bet on any thing the dangdest feller. Parson Walker's wife laid very sick once, for a good while, and it seemed as if they warn's going to save her; but one morning he come in, and Smiley asked how she was, and he said she was considerable better thank the Lord for his inftnit mercy and coming on so smart that, with the blessing of Providence, she'd get well yet; and Smiley, before he thought, says, "Well, I'll risk two- and-a-half that she don't, any way."

Thish-yer Smiley had a mare the boys called her the fifteen- minute nag, but that was only in fun, you know, because, of course, she was faster than that and he used to win money on that horse, for all she was so slow and always had the asthma, or the distemper, or the consumption, or something of that kind. They used to give her two or three hundred yards start, and then pass her under way; but always at the fag-end of the race she'd get excited and desperate- like, and come cavorting and straddling up, and scattering her legs around limber, sometimes in the air, and sometimes out to one side amongst the fences, and kicking up m-o-r-e dust, and raising m-o-r-e racket with her coughing and sneezing and blowing her nose and always fetch up at the stand just about a neck ahead, as near as you could cipher it down.

And he had a little small bull pup, that to look at him you'd think he wan's worth a cent, but to set around and look ornery, and lay for a chance to steal something. But as soon as money was up on him, he was a different dog; his underjaw'd begin to stick out like the fo'castle of a steamboat, and his teeth would uncover, and shine savage like the furnaces. And a dog might tackle him, and bully- rag him, and bite him, and throw him over his shoulder two or three times, and Andrew Jackson which was the name of the pup Andrew Jackson would never let on but what he was satisfied, and hadn't expected nothing else and the bets being doubled and doubled on the other side all the time, till the money was all up; and then all of a sudden he would grab that other dog jest by the j'int of his hind leg and freeze on it not chew, you understand, but only jest grip and hang on till they thronged up the sponge, if it was a year. Smiley always come out winner on that pup, till he harnessed a dog once that didn't have no hind legs, because they'd been sawed off by a circular saw, and when the thing had gone along far enough, and the money was all up, and he come to make a snatch for his pet bolt, he saw in a minute how he'd been imposed on, and how the other dog had him in the door, so to speak, and he 'peered surprised, and then he looked sorter discouraged-like, and didn't try no more to win the fight, and so he got shucked out bad. He give Smiley a look, as much as to say his heart was broke, and it was his fault, for putting up a dog that hadn't no hind legs for him to take bolt of, which was his main dependence in a fight, and then he limped off a piece and laid down and died. It was a good pup, was that Andrew Jackson, and would have made a name for hisself if he'd lived, for the stuff was in him, and he had genius I know it, because he hadn't had no opportunities to speak of, and it don't stand to reason that a dog could make such a fight as he could under them circumstances, if he hadn't no talent. It always makes me feel sorry when I think of that last fight of his'n, and the way it turned out.

Well, thish-yer Smiley had rat-tarriers, and chicken cocks, and tom- cats, and all of them kind of things, till you couldn't rest, and you couldn't fetch nothing for him to bet on but he'd match you. He ketched a frog one day, and took him home, and said he cal'klated to edercate him; and so he never done nothing for three months but set in his back yard and learn that frog to jump. And you bet you he did learn him, too. He'd give him a little punch behind, and the next minute you'd see that frog whirling in the air like a doughnut see him turn one summerset, or may be a couple, if he got a good start, and come down flat-footed and all right, like a cat. He got him up so in the matter of catching flies, and kept him in practice so constant, that he'd nail a fly every time as far as he could see him. Smiley said all a frog wanted was education, and he could do most any thing and I believe him. Why, I've seen him set Dan'l Webster down here on this floor Dan'l Webster was the name of the frog and sing out, "Flies, Dan'l, flies!" and quicker'n you could wink, he'd spring straight up, and snake a fly off'n the counter there, and flop down on the floor again as solid as a gob of mud, and fall to scratching the side of his head with his hind foot as indifferent as if he hadn't no idea he'd been doin' any more'n any frog might do. You never see a frog so modest and straightforward as he was, for all he was so gifted. And when it come to fair and square jumping on a dead level, he could get over more ground at one straddle than any animal of his breed you ever see. Jumping on a dead level was his strong suit, you understand; and when it come to that, Smiley would ante up money on him as long as he had a red. Smiley was monstrous proud of his frog, and well he might be, for fellers that had traveled and been everywheres, all said he laid over any frog that ever they see.

Well, Smiley kept the beast in a little lattice box, and he used to fetch him down town sometimes and lay for a bet. One day a feller a stranger in the camp, he was come across him with his box, and says:

"What might it be that you've got in the box?"

And Smiley says, sorter indifferent like, "It might be a parrot, or it might be a canary, may be, but it an't it's only just a frog."

And the feller took it, and looked at it careful, and turned it round this way and that, and says, "H'm so 'tis. Well, what's he good for?"

"Well," Smiley says, easy and careless, "He's good enough for one thing, I should judge he can outjump any frog in Calaveras county."

The feller took the box again, and took another long, particular look, and give it back to Smiley, and says, very deliberate, "Well, I don't see no p'ints about that frog that's any better'n any other frog."

"May be you don't," Smiley says. "May be you understand frogs, and may be you don't understand 'em; may be you've had experience, and may be you an't only a amature, as it were. Anyways, I've got my opinion, and I'll risk forty dollars that he can outjump any frog in Calaveras county."

And the feller studied a minute, and then says, kinder sad like, "Well, I'm only a stranger here, and I an't got no frog; but if I had a frog, I'd bet you."

And then Smiley says, "That's all right that's all right if you'll hold my box a minute, I'll go and get you a frog." And so the feller took the box, and put up his forty dollars along with Smiley's, and set down to wait.

So he set there a good while thinking and thinking to hisself, and then he got the frog out and prized his mouth open and took a tea- spoon and filled him full of quail shot filled him pretty near up to his chin and set him on the floor. Smiley he went to the swamp and slopped around in the mud for a long time, and finally he ketched a frog, and fetched him in, and give him to this feller, and says:

"Now, if you're ready, set him alongside of Dan'l, with his fore- paws just even with Dan'l, and I'll give the word." Then he says, "One two three jump!" and him and the feller touched up the frogs from behind, and the new frog hopped off, but Dan'l give a heave, and hysted up his shoulders so like a Frenchman, but it wan's no use he couldn't budge; he was planted as solid as an anvil, and he couldn't no more stir than if he was anchored out. Smiley was a good deal surprised, and he was disgusted too, but he didn't have no idea what the matter was, of course.

The feller took the money and started away; and when he was going out at the door, he sorter jerked his thumb over his shoulders this way at Dan'l, and says again, very deliberate, "Well, I don't see no p'ints about that frog that's any better'n any other frog."

Smiley he stood scratching his head and looking down at Dan'l a long time, and at last he says, "I do wonder what in the nation that frog throw'd off for I wonder if there an't something the matter with him he 'pears to look mighty baggy, somehow." And he ketched Dan'l by the nap of the neck, and lifted him up and says, "Why, blame my cats, if he don't weigh five pound!" and turned him upside down, and he belched out a double handful of shot. And then he see how it was, and he was the maddest man he set the frog down and took out after that feller, but he never ketchd him. And-

[Here Simon Wheeler heard his name called from the front yard, and got up to see what was wanted.] And turning to me as he moved away, he said: "Just set where you are, stranger, and rest easy I an't going to be gone a second."

But, by your leave, I did not think that a continuation of the history of the enterprising vagabond Jim Smiley would be likely to afford me much information concerning the Rev. Leonidas W. Smiley, and so I started away.

At the door I met the sociable Wheeler returning, and he button- holed me and recommenced:

"Well, thish-yer Smiley had a yeller one-eyed cow that didn't have no tail, only jest a short stump like a bannanner, and "

"Oh! hang Smiley and his afflicted cow!" I muttered, good-naturedly, and bidding the old gentleman good-day, I departed.

**Sarah Orne Jewett. “The Lost Lover”**

 For a great many years it had been understood in Longfield that Miss Horatia Dane once had a lover, and that he [had] been lost at sea. By little and little, in one way and another, her acquaintances found out or made up the whole story; and Miss Dane stood in the position, not of an unmarried woman exactly, but rather of having spent most of her life in a long and lonely widowhood. She looked like a person with a history, strangers often said (as if we each did not have a history); and her own unbroken reserve about this romance of hers gave everybody the more respect for it.

 The Longfield people paid willing deference to Miss Dane: her family had always been one that could be liked and respected and she was the last that was left in the old home of which she was so fond. This was a high, square house, with a row of pointed windows in its roof, a peaked porch in front, with some lilac-bushes near it; and down by the road was a long, orderly procession of poplars, like a row of sentinels standing guard. She had lived here alone since her father's death, twenty years before. She was a kind, just woman whose pleasures were of a stately and sober sort; and she seemed not unhappy in her loneliness, though she sometimes said gravely that she was the last of her family, as if the fact had a great sadness for her.

 She had some middle-aged and elderly cousins who lived at a distance, and they came occasionally to see her; but there had been no young people staying in her house for many years until this summer, when the daughter of her youngest cousin had written to ask if she might come to make a visit. She was a motherless girl of twenty, both older and younger than her years. Her father and brother, who were civil engineers, had taken some work upon the line of a railway in the far Western country. Nelly had made many long journeys with them before and since she had left school, and she had meant to follow them now, after spending a fortnight with the old cousin whom she had not seen since her childhood. Her father had laughed at this visit as a freak, and warned her of the dullness and primness of Longfield; but the result was that the girl found herself very happy in the comfortable home. She was still her own free, unfettered, lucky, and sunshiny self; and the old house was so much pleasanter for the girlish face and life, that Miss Horatia had, at first timidly and then most heartily, begged her to stay for the whole summer, or even the autumn, until her father was ready to come East. The name of Dane was very dear to Miss Horatia, and she grew fonder of her guest. When the village people saw her glance at the girl affectionately, as they sat together in the family pew of a Sunday, or saw them walking together after tea, they said it was a good thing for Miss Horatia; how bright she looked! and no doubt she would leave all her money to Nelly Dane, if she played her cards well.

 But we will do Nelly justice, and say that she was not mercenary; she would have scorned such a thought. She had grown to have a great love for her cousin Horatia, and really liked to please her. She idealized her, I have no doubt; and her repression, her grave courtesy and rare words of approval, had a great fascination for a girl who had just been used to people who chattered, and were upon most intimate terms with you directly, and could forget you with equal ease. And Nelly liked having so admiring and easily pleased an audience as Miss Dane and her old servant Melissa. She liked to be queen of her company: she had so many gay, bright stories of what had happened to herself and her friends. Beside, she was clever with her needle, and had all those practical gifts which elderly women approve so heartily in girls. They liked her pretty clothes; she was sensible, and economical, and busy; they praised her to each other and to the world, and even stubborn old Andrew, the man servant to whom Miss Horatia herself spoke with deference, would do anything she asked. Nelly would by no means choose so dull a life as this for the rest of her days; but she enjoyed it immensely for the time being. She instinctively avoided all that would shock the grave dignity and old-school ideas of Miss Dane; and somehow she never had felt happier or better satisfied with life. Perhaps it was because she was her best and most lady-like self. It was not long before she knew the village people almost as well as Miss Dane did, and she became a very great favorite, as a girl so easily can who is good-natured and pretty, and well versed in city fashions; who has that tact and cleverness that come to such a nature from going about the world and knowing many people.

 She had not been in Longfield many weeks before she heard something of Miss Dane's love-story; for one of her new friends asked, in a confidential moment, "Does your cousin ever speak to you about the young man to whom she was engaged to be married?" and Nelly answered, "No," with great wonder, and not without regret at her own ignorance. After this she kept eyes and ears open for whatever news of this lover's existence might be found.

 At last it happened one morning that she had a good chance for a friendly talk with Melissa; for who should know the family affairs better than she? Miss Horatia had taken her second-best parasol, with a deep fringe, and had gone majestically down the street to do some household errands which she could trust to no one. Melissa was shelling peas at the shady kitchen doorstep, and Nelly came strolling round from the garden, along the clean-swept flag-stones, and sat down to help her. Melissa moved along, with a grim smile, to make room for her. "You needn't bother yourself," said she, "I've nothing else to do. You'll green your fingers all over." But she was evidently pleased to have company.

 "My fingers will wash," said Nelly, "and I've nothing else to do either. Please push the basket this way a little, or I shall scatter the pods, and then you will scold." She went to work busily, while she tried to think of the best way to find out the story she wished to hear.

 "There!" said Melissa, "I never told Miss H'ratia to get some citron, and I settled yesterday to make some pound-cake this forenoon after I got dinner along a piece. She's most out o' mustard too; she's set about having mustard to eat with her beef, just as the old colonel was before her. I never saw any other folks eat mustard with their roast beef; but every family has their own tricks. I tied a thread round my left-hand little finger purpose to remember that citron before she came down this morning. I hope I ain't losing my fac'lties." It was seldom that Melissa was so talkative as this at first. She was clearly in a talkative mood.

 "Melissa," asked Nelly, with great bravery, after a minute or two of silence, "who was it that my cousin Horatia was going to marry? It's odd that I shouldn't know; but I don't remember father's ever speaking of it, and I shouldn't think of asking her."

 "I s'pose it'll seem strange to you," said Melissa, beginning to shell the peas a great deal faster, "but as many years as I have lived in this house with her, - her mother, the old lady, fetched me up, - I never knew Miss H'ratia to say a word about him. But there! she knows I know, and we've got an understanding on many things we never talk over as some folks would. I've heard about it from other folks. She was visiting her great-aunt in Salem when she met with him. His name was Carrick, and it was presumed they was going to be married when he came home from the voyage he was lost on. He had the promise of going out master of a new ship. They didn't keep company long; it was made up of a sudden, and folks here didn't get hold of the story till some time after. I've heard some that ought to know say it was only talk, and they never was engaged to be married no more than I am."

 "You say he was lost at sea?" asked Nelly.

 "The ship never was heard from. They supposed she was run down in the night out in the South Seas somewhere. It was a good while before they gave up expecting news; but none ever come. I think she set everything by him, and took it very hard losing of him. But there! she'd never say a word. You're the freest-spoken Dane I ever saw; but you may take it from your mother's folks. I expect he gave her that whale's tooth with the ship drawn on it that's on the mantelpiece in her room. She may have a sight of other keepsakes, for all I know; but it ain't likely." And here there was a pause, in which Nelly grew sorrowful as she thought of the long waiting for tidings of the missing ship, and of her cousin's solitary life. It was very odd to think of prim Miss Horatia's being in love with a sailor. There was a young lieutenant in the navy whom Nelly herself liked dearly, and he had gone away on a long voyage. "Perhaps she's been just as well off," said Melissa. "She's dreadful set, y'r cousin H'ratia is, and sailors is high-tempered men. I've heard it hinted that he was a fast fellow; and if a woman's got a good home like this, and's able to do for herself, she'd better stay there. I ain't going to give up a certainty for an uncertainty, - that's what I always tell 'em," added Melissa, with great decision, as if she were besieged by lovers; but Nelly smiled inwardly as she thought of the courage it would take to support any one who wished to offer her companion his heart and hand. It would need desperate energy to scale the walls of that garrison.

 The green peas were all shelled presently, and Melissa said gravely that she should have to be lazy now until it was time to put in the meat. She wasn't used to being helped, unless there was extra work, and she calculated to have one piece of work join on to another. However, it was no account, and she was obliged for the company; and Nelly laughed merrily as she stood washing her hands in the shining old copper basin at the sink. The sun would not be round that side of the house for a long time yet, and the pink and blue morning-glories were still in their full bloom and freshness. They grew over the window, twined on strings exactly the same distance apart. There was a box crowded full of green houseleeks down at the side of the door; they were straying over the edge, and Melissa stooped stiffly down with an air of disapproval at their untidiness. "They straggle all over everything," said she, "and they're no kind of use, only Miss's mother, she set everything by 'em. She fetched 'em from home with her when she was married, her mother kep' a box, and they came from England. Folks used to say they was good for bee stings." Then she went into the inner kitchen, and Nelly went slowly away along the flag-stones to the garden from whence she had come. The garden-gate opened with a tired creak, and shut with a clack; and she noticed how smooth and shiny the wood was where the touch of so many hands had worn it. There was a great pleasure to this girl in finding herself among such old and well-worn things. She had been for a long time in cities or at the West; and among the old fashions and ancient possessions of Longfield it seemed to her that everything had its story, and she liked the quietness and unchangeableness with which life seemed to go on from year to year. She had seen many a dainty or gorgeous garden, but never one that she had liked so well as this, with its herb-bed and its broken rows of currant-bushes, its tall stalks of white lilies, and its wandering rose-bushes and honeysuckles, that had bloomed beside the straight paths for so many more summers than she herself had lived. She picked a little bouquet of late red roses, and carried it into the house to put on the parlor table. The wide hall-door was standing open, with its green outer blinds closed, and the old hall was dim and cool. Miss Horatia did not like a glare of sunlight, and she abhorred flies with her whole heart. Nelly could hardly see her way through the rooms, it had been so bright out of doors; but she brought the tall champagne-glass of water from the dining-room and put the flowers in their place. Then she looked at two silhouettes which stood on the mantel in carved ebony frames. They were portraits of an uncle of Miss Dane and his wife. Miss Dane had thought Nelly looked like this uncle the evening before. She could not see the likeness herself; but the pictures suggested something else, and she turned suddenly, and went hurrying up the stairs to Miss Horatia's own room, where she remembered to have seen a group of silhouettes fastened to the wall. There were seven or eight, and she looked at the young men among them most carefully; but they were all marked with the name of Dane: they were Miss Horatia's uncles and brothers, and our friend hung them on their little brass hooks again with a feeling of disappointment. Perhaps her cousin had a quaint miniature of the lover, painted on ivory, and shut in a worn red morocco case; she hoped she should get a sight of it some day. This story of the lost sailor had a wonderful charm for the girl. Miss Horatia had never been so interesting to her before. How she must have mourned for the lover, and missed him, and hoped there would yet be news from the ship! Nelly thought she would tell her own little love-story some day, though there was not much to tell yet, in spite of there being so much to think about. She built a little castle in Spain as she sat in the front window-seat of the upper hall, and dreamed pleasant stories for herself until the sharp noise of the front gate-latch waked her; and she looked out through the blind to see her cousin coming up the walk.

 Miss Horatia looked hot and tired, and her thoughts were not of any fashion of romance. "It is going to be very warm," said she. "I have been worrying ever since I have been gone, because I forgot to ask Andrew to pick those white currants for the minister's wife. I promised that she should have them early this morning. Would you go out to the kitchen and ask Melissa to step in for a moment, my dear?"

 Melissa was picking over red currants to make a pie, and rose from her chair with a little unwillingness. "I guess they could wait until afternoon," said she, as she came back. "Miss H'ratia's in a fret because she forgot about sending some white currants to the minister's. I told her that Andrew had gone to have the horses shod, and wouldn't be back till near noon. I don't see why part of the folks in the world should kill themselves trying to suit the rest. As long as I haven't got any citron for the cake, I suppose I might go out and pick 'em," added Melissa ungraciously. "I'll get some to set away for tea anyhow."

 Miss Dane had a letter to write after she had rested from her walk; and Nelly soon left her in the dark parlor, and went back to the sunshiny garden to help Melissa, who seemed to be taking life with more than her usual disapproval. She was sheltered by an enormous gingham sunbonnet.

 "I set out to free my mind to your cousin H'ratia this morning," said she, as Nelly crouched down at the opposite side of the bush where she was picking; "but we can't agree on that p'int, and it's no use. I don't say nothing. You might 's well ask the moon to face about and travel the other way as to try to change Miss H'ratia's mind. I ain't going to argue it with her, it ain't my place; I know that as well as anybody. She'd run her feet off for the minister's folks any day; and though I do say he's a fair preacher, they haven't got a speck o' consideration nor fac'lty; they think the world was made for them, but I think likely they'll find out it wasn't; most folks do. When he first was settled here, I had a fit o' sickness, and he come to see me when I was getting over the worst of it. He did the best he could, I always took it very kind of him; but he made a prayer and he kep' sayin' `this aged handmaid,' I should think a dozen times. Aged handmaid!" said Melissa scornfully; "I don't call myself aged yet, and that was more than ten years ago. I never made pretensions to being younger than I am; but you'd 'a' thought I was a topplin' old creatur' going on a hundred."

 Nelly laughed. Melissa looked cross, and moved on to the next currant-bush. "So that's why you don't like the minister?" But the question did not seem to please.

 "I hope I never should be set against a preacher by such as that." And Nelly hastened to change the subject; but there was to be a last word: "I like to see a minister that's solid minister right straight through, not one of these veneered folks. But old Parson Croden spoilt me for setting under any other preaching."

 "I wonder," said Nelly after a little, "If Cousin Horatia has any picture of that Captain Carrick."

 "He wasn't captain," said Melissa. "I never heard that it was any more than they talked of giving him a ship next voyage."

 "And you never saw him? He never came here to see her?"

 "Bless you, no! She met with him at Salem, where she was spending the winter, and he went right away to sea. I've heard a good deal more about it of late years than I ever did at the time. I suppose the Salem folks talked about it enough. All I know is, there was other good matches that offered to her since, and couldn't get her; and I suppose it was on account of her heart's being buried in the deep with him." And this unexpected bit of sentiment, spoken in Melissa's grum tone, seemed so funny to her young companion, that she bent very low to pick from a currant-twig close to the ground, and could not ask any more questions for some time.

 "I have seen her a sight o' times when I knew she was thinking about him," Melissa went on presently, this time with a tenderness in her voice that touched Nelly's heart. "She's been dreadful lonesome. She and the old colonel, her father, wasn't much company to each other, and she always kep' everything to herself. The only time she ever said a word to me was one night six or seven years ago this Christmas. They got up a Christmas-tree in the vestry, and she went, and I did too; I guess everybody in the whole church and parish that could crawl turned out to go. The children they made a dreadful racket. I'd ha' got my ears took off if I had been so forth-putting when I was little. I was looking round for Miss H'ratia 'long at the last of the evening, and somebody said they'd seen her go home. I hurried, and I couldn't see any light in the house, and I was afraid she was sick or something. She come and let me in, and I see she had been a-cryin'. I says, `Have you heard any bad news?' But she says, `No,' and began to cry again, real pitiful. `I never felt so lonesome in my life,' says she, `as I did down there. It's a dreadful thing to be left all alone in the world.' I did feel for her; but I couldn't seem to say a word. I put some pine chips I had handy for morning on the kitchen fire, and I made her up a cup o' good hot tea quick 's I could, and took it to her; and I guess she felt better. She never went to bed till three o'clock that night. I couldn't shut my eyes till I heard her come upstairs. There! I set everything by Miss H'ratia. I haven't got no folks either. I was left an orphan over to Deerfield, where Miss's mother come from, and she took me out o' the town-farm to bring up. I remember when I come here, I was so small I had a box to stand up on when I helped wash the dishes. There's nothing I ain't had to make me comfortable, and I do just as I'm a mind to, and call in extra help every day of the week if I give the word; but I've had my lonesome times, and I guess Miss H'ratia knew."

 Nelly was very much touched by this bit of a story, it was a new idea to her that Melissa should have so much affection and be so sympathetic. People never will get over being surprised that chestnut-burrs are not as rough inside as they are outside, and the girl's heart warmed toward the old woman who had spoken with such unlooked-for sentiment and pathos. Melissa went to the house with her basket, and Nelly also went in, but only to put on another hat, and see if it were straight in a minute spent before the old mirror, before she hurried down the long elm-shaded street to buy a pound of citron for the cake. She left it on the kitchen table when she came back, and nobody ever said anything about it; only there were two delicious pound-cakes - a heart and a round - on a little blue china plate beside Nelly's plate at tea.

 After tea, Nelly and Miss Dane sat in the front doorway, - the elder woman in a high-backed chair, and the younger on the door-step. The tree-toads and crickets were tuning up heartily, the stars showed a little through the trees, and the elms looked heavy and black against the sky. The fragrance of the white lilies in the garden blew through the hall. Miss Horatia was tapping the ends of her fingers together. Probably she was not thinking of anything in particular. She had had a very peaceful day, with the exception of the currants; and they had, after all, gone to the parsonage some time before noon. Beside this, the minister had sent word that the delay made no distress; for his wife had unexpectedly gone to Downton to pass the day and night. Miss Horatia had received the business letter for which she had been looking for several days; so there was nothing to regret deeply for that day, and there seemed to be nothing for one to dread on the morrow.

 "Cousin Horatia," asked Nelly, "are you sure you like having me here? Are you sure I don't trouble you?"

 "Of course not," said Miss Dane, without a bit of sentiment in her tone; "I find it very pleasant having young company, though I am used to being alone; and I don't mind it as I suppose you would."

 "I should mind it very much," said the girl softly.

 "You would get used to it, as I have," said Miss Dane. "Yes, dear, I like having you here better and better. I hate to think of your going away." And she smoothed Nelly's hair as if she thought she might have spoken coldly at first, and wished to make up for it. This rare caress was not without its effect.

 "I don't miss father and Dick so very much," owned Nelly frankly, "because I have grown used to their coming and going; but sometimes I miss people - Cousin Horatia, did I ever say anything to you about George Forest?"

 "I think I remember the name," answered Miss Dane.

 "He is in the navy, and he has gone a long voyage, and - I think everything of him. I missed him awfully; but it is almost time to get a letter."

 "Does your father approve of him?" asked Miss Dane, with great propriety. "You are very young yet, and you must not think of such a thing carelessly. I should be so much grieved if you threw away your happiness."

 "Oh! we are not really engaged," said Nelly, who felt a little chilled. "I suppose we are, too; only nobody knows yet. Yes, father knows him as well as I do, and he is very fond of him. Of course I should not keep it from father; but he guessed it himself. Only it's such a long cruise, Cousin Horatia, - three years, I suppose, - away off in China and Japan."

 "I have known longer voyages than that," said Miss Dane, with a quiver in her voice; and she rose suddenly, and walked away, this grave, reserved woman, who seemed so contented and so comfortable. But when she came back, she asked Nelly a great deal about her lover, and learned more of the girl's life than she ever had before. And they talked together in the pleasantest way about this pleasant subject, which was so close to Nelly's heart, until Melissa brought the candles at ten o'clock, that being the hour of Miss Dane's bedtime.

 But that night Miss Dane did not go to bed at ten; she sat by the window in her room, thinking. The moon rose late; and after a little while she blew out her candles, which were burning low. I suppose that the years which had come and gone since the young sailor went away on that last voyage of his had each added to her affection for him. She was a person who clung the more fondly to youth as she left it the farther behind.

 This is such a natural thing; the great sorrows of our youth sometimes become the amusements of our later years; we can only remember them with a smile. We find that our lives look fairer to us, and we forget what used to trouble us so much, when we look back. Miss Dane certainly had come nearer to truly loving the sailor than she had any one else; and the more she thought of it, the more it became the romance of her life. She no longer asked herself, as she often had done in middle life, whether, if he had lived and had come home, she would have loved and married him. She had minded less and less, year by year, knowing that her friends and neighbors thought her faithful to the love of her youth. Poor, gay, handsome Joe Carrick! how fond he had been of her, and how he had looked at her that day he sailed away out of Salem Harbor on the brig Chevalier! If she had only known that she never should see him again, poor fellow!

 But, as usual, her thoughts changed their current a little at the end of her reverie. Perhaps, after all, loneliness was not so hard to bear as other sorrows. She had had a pleasant life, God had been very good to her, and had spared her many trials, and granted her many blessings. "I am an old woman now," she said to herself. "Things are better as they are; I can get on by myself better than most women can, and I never should have liked to be interfered with."

 Then she shut out the moonlight, and lighted her candles again, with an almost guilty feeling. What should I say if Nelly sat up till nearly midnight looking out at the moon?" she thought. "It is very silly; but this is such a beautiful night. I should like to have her see the moon shining through the tops of the trees." But Nelly was sleeping the sleep of the just and sensible in her own room.

 Next morning at breakfast, Nelly was a little conscious of there having been uncommon confidences the night before; but Miss Dane was her usual calm and somewhat formal self, and proposed their making a few calls after dinner, if the weather were not too hot. Nelly at once wondered what she had better wear. There was a certain black grenadine which Miss Horatia had noticed with approval, and she remembered that the lower ruffle needed hemming, and made up her mind that she would devote most of the time before dinner to that and to some other repairs. So, after breakfast was over, she brought the dress downstairs, with her work-box, and settled herself in the dining-room. Miss Dane usually sat there in the morning; it was a pleasant room, and she could keep an unsuspected watch over the kitchen and Melissa, who did not need watching in the least. I dare say it was for the sake of being within the sound of a voice.

 Miss Dane marched in and out that morning; she went upstairs, and came down again, and was mysteriously busy for a while in the parlor. Nelly was sewing steadily by a window, where one of the blinds was a little way open, and tethered in its place by a string. She hummed a tune to herself over and over:-

"What will you do, love, when I am going,

With white sails flowing, the seas beyond?"

And old Melissa, going to and fro at her work in the kitchen, grumbled out bits of an ancient psalm-tune at intervals. There seemed to be some connection between these fragments in her mind; it was like a ledge of rock in a pasture, that sometimes runs under the ground, and then crops out again. Perhaps it was the tune of Windham.

 Nelly found that there was a good deal to be done to the grenadine dress when she looked it over critically, and became very diligent. It was quiet in and about the house for a long time, until suddenly she heard the sound of heavy footsteps coming in from the road. The side-door was in a little entry between the room where Nelly sat and the kitchen, and the new-comer knocked loudly. "A tramp," said Nelly to herself; while Melissa came to open the door, wiping her hands hurriedly on her apron.

 "I wonder if you couldn't give me something to eat," said the man.

 "I suppose I could," answered Melissa. "Will you step in?" Beggars were very few in Longfield, and Miss Dane never wished anybody to go away hungry from her house. It was off the grand highway of tramps; but they were by no means unknown.

 Melissa searched among her stores, and Nelly heard her putting one plate after another on the kitchen table, and thought that the breakfast promised to be a good one, if it were late.

 "Don't put yourself out," said the man, as he moved his chair nearer. "I lodged in an old barn three or four miles above here last night, and there didn't seem to be very good board there."

 "Going far?" inquired Melissa concisely.

 "Boston," said the man. "I'm a little too old to travel afoot. Now if I could go by water, it would seem nearer. I'm more used to the water. This is a royal good piece o' beef. I suppose you couldn't put your hand on a mug of cider?" This was said humbly; but the tone failed to touch Melissa's heart.

 "No, I couldn't," said she decisively; so there was an end of that, and the conversation flagged for a time.

 Presently Melissa came to speak to Miss Dane, who had just come downstairs. "Could you stay in the kitchen a few minutes?" she whispered. "There's an old creatur' there that looks foreign. He came to the door for something to eat, and I gave it to him; but he's miser'ble looking, and I don't like to leave him alone. I'm just in the midst o' dressing the chickens. He'll be through pretty quick, according to the way he's eating now."

 Miss Dane followed her without a word; and the man half rose, and said, "Good-morning, madam!" with unusual courtesy. And, when Melissa was out of hearing, he spoke again: "I suppose you haven't any cider?" to which his hostess answered, "I couldn't give you any this morning," in a tone that left no room for argument. He looked as if he had had a great deal too much to drink already.

 "How far do you call it from here to Boston?" he asked, and was told that it was eighty miles.

 "I'm a slow traveler," said he; "sailors don't take much to walking." Miss Dane asked him if he had been a sailor. "Nothing else," replied the man, who seemed much inclined to talk. He had been eating like a hungry dog, as if he were half-starved, - a slouching, red-faced, untidy-looking old man, with some traces of former good looks still to be discovered in his face. "Nothing else. I ran away to sea when I was a boy, and I followed it until I got so old they wouldn't ship me even for cook." There was something in his feeling, for once, so comfortable, - perhaps it was being with a lady like Miss Dane, who pitied him, - that lifted his thoughts a little from their usual low level. "It's drink that's been the ruin of me," said he. "I ought to have been somebody. I was nobody's fool when I was young. I got to be mate of a firstrate ship, and there was some talk o' my being captain before long. She was lost that voyage, and three of us were all that was saved; we got picked up by a Chinese junk. She had the plague aboard of her, and my mates died of it, and I was down myself. It was a hell of a place to be in. When I got ashore I shipped on an old bark that pretended to be coming round the Cape, and she turned out to be a pirate. I just went to the dogs, and I've gone from bad to worse ever since."

 "It's never too late to mend," said Melissa, who came into the kitchen just then for a string to tie the chickens.

 "Lord help us, yes, it is!" said the sailor. "It's easy for you to say that. I'm too old. I ain't been master of this craft for a good while." And he laughed at his melancholy joke.

 "Don't say that," said Miss Dane.

 "Well, now, what could an old wrack like me do to earn a living? and who 'd want me if I could? You wouldn't. I don't know when I've been treated so decent as this before. I'm all broke down." But his tone was no longer sincere; he had fallen back on his profession of beggar.

 "Couldn't you get into some asylum or - there's the Sailors' Snug Harbor, isn't that for men like you? It seems such a pity for a man of your years to be homeless and a wanderer. Haven't you any friends at all?" And here, suddenly, Miss Dane's face altered, and she grew very white; something startled her. She looked as one might who saw a fearful ghost.

 "No," said the man; "but my folks used to be some of the best in Salem. I haven't shown my head there this good while. I was an orphan. My grandmother brought me up. You see, I didn't come back to the States for thirty or forty years. Along at the first of it I used to see men in port that I used to know; but I always dodged 'em, and I was way off in outlandish places. I've got an awful sight to answer for. I used to have a good wife when I was in Australia. I don't know where I haven't been, first and last. I was always a gay fellow. I've spent as much as a couple o' fortunes, and here I am a-begging. Devil take it!"

 Nelly was still sewing in the dining-room; but, soon after Miss Dane had gone out to the kitchen, one of the doors between had slowly closed itself with a plaintive whine. The round stone which Melissa used to keep it open had been pushed away. Nelly was a little annoyed; she liked to hear what was going on; but she was just then holding her work with great care in a place that was hard to sew, so she did not move. She heard the murmur of voices, and thought, after a while, that the old vagabond ought to go away by this time. What could be making her cousin Horatia talk so long with him? It was not like her at all. He would beg for money, of course, and she hoped Miss Horatia would not give him a single cent.

 It was some time before the kitchen-door opened, and the man came out with clumsy, stumbling steps. "I'm much obliged to you," he said, "and I don't know but it is the last time I'll get treated as if I was a gentleman. Is there anything I could do for you round the place?" he asked hesitatingly and as if he hoped that his offer would not be accepted.

 "No," answered Miss Dane. "No, thank you. Good-by!" and he went away.

 The old beggar had been lifted a little above his low life; he fell back again directly before he was out of the gate. "I'm blessed if she didn't give me a ten-dollar bill!" said he. "She must have thought it was one. I'll get out o' call as quick as I can; hope she won't find it out, and send anybody after me." Visions of unlimited drinks, and other things in which it was possible to find pleasure, flitted through his stupid mind. "How the old lady stared at me once!" he thought. "Wonder if she was anybody I used to know? `Downton?' I don't know as I ever heard of the place." And he scuffed along the dusty road; and that night he was very drunk, and the next day he went wandering on, God only knows where.

 But Nelly and Melissa both heard a strange noise in the kitchen, as if some one had fallen, and they found that Miss Horatia had fainted dead away. It was partly the heat, she said, when she saw their anxious faces as she came to herself; she had had a little headache all the morning; it was very hot and close in the kitchen, and the faintness had come upon her suddenly. They helped her to walk into the cool parlor presently, and Melissa brought her a glass of wine, and Nelly sat beside her on a footstool as she lay on the sofa, and fanned her. Once she held her cheek against Miss Horatia's hand for a minute, and she will never know as long as she lives, what a comfort she was that day.

 Every one but Miss Dane forgot the old sailor tramp in this excitement that followed his visit. Do you guess already who he was? But the certainty could not come to you with the chill and horror it did to Miss Dane. There had been something familiar in his look and voice from the first, and then she had suddenly known him, her lost lover. It was an awful change that the years had made in him. He had truly called himself a wreck; he was like some dreary wreck in its decay and utter ruin, its miserable ugliness and worthlessness, falling to pieces in the slow tides of a lifeless southern sea.

 And he had once been her lover, Miss Dane thought bitterly, many times in the days that followed. Not that there was ever anything asked or promised between them, but they had liked each other dearly, and had parted with deep sorrow. She had thought of him all these years so tenderly; she had believed always that his love had been even greater than her own, and never once had doubted that the missing brig Chevalier had carried with it down into the sea a heart that was true to her.

 By little and little this all grew familiar, and she accustomed herself to the knowledge of her new secret. She shuddered at the thought of the misery of a life with him, and she thanked God for sparing her such shame and despair. The distance between them seemed immense. She had always been a person of so much consequence among her friends, and so dutiful and irreproachable a woman. She had not begun to understand what dishonor is in the world; her life had been shut in by safe and orderly surroundings. It was a strange chance that had brought this wanderer to her door. She remembered his wretched untidiness. She had not liked even to stand near him. She had never imagined him grown old: he had always been young to her. It was a great mercy he had not known her; it would have been a most miserable position for them both; and yet she thought, with sad surprise, that she had not known she had changed so entirely. She thought of the different ways their roads in life had gone; she pitied him; she cried about him more than once; and she wished that she could know he was dead. He might have been such a brave, good man with his strong will and resolute courage. God forgive him for the wickedness which his strength had been made to serve! "God forgive him!" said Miss Horatia to herself sadly over and over again. She wondered if she ought to have let him go away, and so have lost sight of him; but she could not do anything else. She suffered terribly on his account; she had a pity, such as God's pity must be, for even his willful sins.

 So her romance was all over with; yet the townspeople still whispered it to strangers, and even Melissa and Nelly never knew how she had really lost her lover in so strange and sad a way in her latest years. Nobody noticed much change; but Melissa saw that the whale's tooth disappeared from its place in Miss Horatia's room, and her old friends said to each other that she began to show her age a great deal. She seemed really like an old woman now; she was not the woman she had been a year ago.

 This is all of the story; but we so often wish, when a story comes to an end, that we knew what became of the people afterward. Shall we believe that Miss Horatia clings more and more fondly to her young cousin Nelly; and that Nelly will stay with her a great deal before she marries, and sometimes afterward, when the lieutenant goes away to sea? Shall we say that Miss Dane seems as well satisfied and comfortable as ever, though she acknowledges she is not so young as she used to be, and secretly misses something out of her life? It is the contentment of winter rather than that of summer: the flowers are out of bloom for her now, and under the snow. And Melissa, will not she always be the same, with a quaintness and freshness and toughness like a cedar-tree, to the end of her days? Let us hope they will live on together and be untroubled this long time yet, the two good women; and let us wish Nelly much pleasure, and a sweet soberness and fearlessness as she grows older and finds life a harder thing to understand, and a graver thing to know.

**William Faulkner. “A Rose for Emily”**

**I**

WHEN Miss Emily Grierson died, our whole town went to her funeral: the men through a sort of respectful affection for a fallen monument, the women mostly out of curiosity to see the inside of her house, which no one save an old man-servant--a combined gardener and cook--had seen in at least ten years.

It was a big, squarish frame house that had once been white, decorated with cupolas and spires and scrolled balconies in the heavily lightsome style of the seventies, set on what had once been our most select street. But garages and cotton gins had encroached and obliterated even the august names of that neighborhood; only Miss Emily's house was left, lifting its stubborn and coquettish decay above the cotton wagons and the gasoline pumps-an eyesore among eyesores. And now Miss Emily had gone to join the representatives of those august names where they lay in the cedar-bemused cemetery among the ranked and anonymous graves of Union and Confederate soldiers who fell at the battle of Jefferson.

Alive, Miss Emily had been a tradition, a duty, and a care; a sort of hereditary obligation upon the town, dating from that day in 1894 when Colonel Sartoris, the mayor--he who fathered the edict that no Negro woman should appear on the streets without an apron-remitted her taxes, the dispensation dating from the death of her father on into perpetuity. Not that Miss Emily would have accepted charity. Colonel Sartoris invented an involved tale to the effect that Miss Emily's father had loaned money to the town, which the town, as a matter of business, preferred this way of repaying. Only a man of Colonel Sartoris' generation and thought could have invented it, and only a woman could have believed it.

When the next generation, with its more modern ideas, became mayors and aldermen, this arrangement created some little dissatisfaction. On the first of the year they mailed her a tax notice. February came, and there was no reply. They wrote her a formal letter, asking her to call at the sheriff's office at her convenience. A week later the mayor wrote her himself, offering to call or to send his car for her, and received in reply a note on paper of an archaic shape, in a thin, flowing calligraphy in faded ink, to the effect that she no longer went out at all. The tax notice was also enclosed, without comment.

They called a special meeting of the Board of Aldermen. A deputation waited upon her, knocked at the door through which no visitor had passed since she ceased giving china-painting lessons eight or ten years earlier. They were admitted by the old Negro into a dim hall from which a stairway mounted into still more shadow. It smelled of dust and disuse--a close, dank smell. The Negro led them into the parlor. It was furnished in heavy, leather-covered furniture. When the Negro opened the blinds of one window, they could see that the leather was cracked; and when they sat down, a faint dust rose sluggishly about their thighs, spinning with slow motes in the single sun-ray. On a tarnished gilt easel before the fireplace stood a crayon portrait of Miss Emily's father.

They rose when she entered--a small, fat woman in black, with a thin gold chain descending to her waist and vanishing into her belt, leaning on an ebony cane with a tarnished gold head. Her skeleton was small and spare; perhaps that was why what would have been merely plumpness in another was obesity in her. She looked bloated, like a body long submerged in motionless water, and of that pallid hue. Her eyes, lost in the fatty ridges of her face, looked like two small pieces of coal pressed into a lump of dough as they moved from one face to another while the visitors stated their errand.

She did not ask them to sit. She just stood in the door and listened quietly until the spokesman came to a stumbling halt. Then they could hear the invisible watch ticking at the end of the gold chain.

Her voice was dry and cold. "I have no taxes in Jefferson. Colonel Sartoris explained it to me. Perhaps one of you can gain access to the city records and satisfy yourselves."

"But we have. We are the city authorities, Miss Emily. Didn't you get a notice from the sheriff, signed by him?"

"I received a paper, yes," Miss Emily said. "Perhaps he considers himself the sheriff . . . I have no taxes in Jefferson."

"But there is nothing on the books to show that, you see We must go by the--"

"See Colonel Sartoris. I have no taxes in Jefferson."

"But, Miss Emily--"

"See Colonel Sartoris." (Colonel Sartoris had been dead almost ten years.) "I have no taxes in Jefferson. Tobe!" The Negro appeared. "Show these gentlemen out."

**II**

So SHE vanquished them, horse and foot, just as she had vanquished their fathers thirty years before about the smell.

That was two years after her father's death and a short time after her sweetheart--the one we believed would marry her --had deserted her. After her father's death she went out very little; after her sweetheart went away, people hardly saw her at all. A few of the ladies had the temerity to call, but were not received, and the only sign of life about the place was the Negro man--a young man then--going in and out with a market basket.

"Just as if a man--any man--could keep a kitchen properly, "the ladies said; so they were not surprised when the smell developed. It was another link between the gross, teeming world and the high and mighty Griersons.

A neighbor, a woman, complained to the mayor, Judge Stevens, eighty years old.

"But what will you have me do about it, madam?" he said.

"Why, send her word to stop it," the woman said. "Isn't there a law? "

"I'm sure that won't be necessary," Judge Stevens said. "It's probably just a snake or a rat that nigger of hers killed in the yard. I'll speak to him about it."

The next day he received two more complaints, one from a man who came in diffident deprecation. "We really must do something about it, Judge. I'd be the last one in the world to bother Miss Emily, but we've got to do something." That night the Board of Aldermen met--three graybeards and one younger man, a member of the rising generation.

"It's simple enough," he said. "Send her word to have her place cleaned up. Give her a certain time to do it in, and if she don't. .."

"Dammit, sir," Judge Stevens said, "will you accuse a lady to her face of smelling bad?"

So the next night, after midnight, four men crossed Miss Emily's lawn and slunk about the house like burglars, sniffing along the base of the brickwork and at the cellar openings while one of them performed a regular sowing motion with his hand out of a sack slung from his shoulder. They broke open the cellar door and sprinkled lime there, and in all the outbuildings. As they recrossed the lawn, a window that had been dark was lighted and Miss Emily sat in it, the light behind her, and her upright torso motionless as that of an idol. They crept quietly across the lawn and into the shadow of the locusts that lined the street. After a week or two the smell went away.

That was when people had begun to feel really sorry for her. People in our town, remembering how old lady Wyatt, her great-aunt, had gone completely crazy at last, believed that the Griersons held themselves a little too high for what they really were. None of the young men were quite good enough for Miss Emily and such. We had long thought of them as a tableau, Miss Emily a slender figure in white in the background, her father a spraddled silhouette in the foreground, his back to her and clutching a horsewhip, the two of them framed by the back-flung front door. So when she got to be thirty and was still single, we were not pleased exactly, but vindicated; even with insanity in the family she wouldn't have turned down all of her chances if they had really materialized.

When her father died, it got about that the house was all that was left to her; and in a way, people were glad. At last they could pity Miss Emily. Being left alone, and a pauper, she had become humanized. Now she too would know the old thrill and the old despair of a penny more or less.

The day after his death all the ladies prepared to call at the house and offer condolence and aid, as is our custom Miss Emily met them at the door, dressed as usual and with no trace of grief on her face. She told them that her father was not dead. She did that for three days, with the ministers calling on her, and the doctors, trying to persuade her to let them dispose of the body. Just as they were about to resort to law and force, she broke down, and they buried her father quickly.

We did not say she was crazy then. We believed she had to do that. We remembered all the young men her father had driven away, and we knew that with nothing left, she would have to cling to that which had robbed her, as people will.

**III**

SHE WAS SICK for a long time. When we saw her again, her hair was cut short, making her look like a girl, with a vague resemblance to those angels in colored church windows--sort of tragic and serene.

The town had just let the contracts for paving the sidewalks, and in the summer after her father's death they began the work. The construction company came with riggers and mules and machinery, and a foreman named Homer Barron, a Yankee--a big, dark, ready man, with a big voice and eyes lighter than his face. The little boys would follow in groups to hear him cuss the riggers, and the riggers singing in time to the rise and fall of picks. Pretty soon he knew everybody in town. Whenever you heard a lot of laughing anywhere about the square, Homer Barron would be in the center of the group. Presently we began to see him and Miss Emily on Sunday afternoons driving in the yellow-wheeled buggy and the matched team of bays from the livery stable.

At first we were glad that Miss Emily would have an interest, because the ladies all said, "Of course a Grierson would not think seriously of a Northerner, a day laborer." But there were still others, older people, who said that even grief could not cause a real lady to forget noblesse oblige- -

without calling it noblesse oblige. They just said, "Poor Emily. Her kinsfolk should come to her." She had some kin in Alabama; but years ago her father had fallen out with them over the estate of old lady Wyatt, the crazy woman, and there was no communication between the two families. They had not even been represented at the funeral.

And as soon as the old people said, "Poor Emily," the whispering began. "Do you suppose it's really so?" they said to one another. "Of course it is. What else could . . ." This behind their hands; rustling of craned silk and satin behind jalousies closed upon the sun of Sunday afternoon as the thin, swift clop-clop-clop of the matched team passed: "Poor Emily."

She carried her head high enough--even when we believed that she was fallen. It was as if she demanded more than ever the recognition of her dignity as the last Grierson; as if it had wanted that touch of earthiness to reaffirm her imperviousness. Like when she bought the rat poison, the arsenic. That was over a year after they had begun to say "Poor Emily," and while the two female cousins were visiting her.

"I want some poison," she said to the druggist. She was over thirty then, still a slight woman, though thinner than usual, with cold, haughty black eyes in a face the flesh of which was strained across the temples and about the eyesockets as you imagine a lighthouse-keeper's face ought to look. "I want some poison," she said.

"Yes, Miss Emily. What kind? For rats and such? I'd recom--"

"I want the best you have. I don't care what kind."

The druggist named several. "They'll kill anything up to an elephant. But what you want is--"

"Arsenic," Miss Emily said. "Is that a good one?"

"Is . . . arsenic? Yes, ma'am. But what you want--"

"I want arsenic."

The druggist looked down at her. She looked back at him, erect, her face like a strained flag. "Why, of course," the druggist said. "If that's what you want. But the law requires you to tell what you are going to use it for."

Miss Emily just stared at him, her head tilted back in order to look him eye for eye, until he looked away and went and got the arsenic and wrapped it up. The Negro delivery boy brought her the package; the druggist didn't come back. When she opened the package at home there was written on the box, under the skull and bones: "For rats."

**IV**

So THE NEXT day we all said, "She will kill herself"; and we said it would be the best thing. When she had first begun to be seen with Homer Barron, we had said, "She will marry him." Then we said, "She will persuade him yet," because Homer himself had remarked--he liked men, and it was known that he drank with the younger men in the Elks' Club--that he was not a marrying man. Later we said, "Poor Emily" behind the jalousies as they passed on Sunday afternoon in the glittering buggy, Miss Emily with her head high and Homer Barron with his hat cocked and a cigar in his teeth, reins and whip in a yellow glove.

Then some of the ladies began to say that it was a disgrace to the town and a bad example to the young people. The men did not want to interfere, but at last the ladies forced the Baptist minister--Miss Emily's people were Episcopal-- to call upon her. He would never divulge what happened during that interview, but he refused to go back again. The next Sunday they again drove about the streets, and the following day the minister's wife wrote to Miss Emily's relations in Alabama.

So she had blood-kin under her roof again and we sat back to watch developments. At first nothing happened. Then we were sure that they were to be married. We learned that Miss Emily had been to the jeweler's and ordered a man's toilet set in silver, with the letters H. B. on each piece. Two days later we learned that she had bought a complete outfit of men's clothing, including a nightshirt, and we said, "They are married." We were really glad. We were glad because the two female cousins were even more Grierson than Miss Emily had ever been.

So we were not surprised when Homer Barron--the streets had been finished some time since--was gone. We were a little disappointed that there was not a public blowing-off, but we believed that he had gone on to prepare for Miss Emily's coming, or to give her a chance to get rid of the cousins. (By that time it was a cabal, and we were all Miss Emily's allies to help circumvent the cousins.) Sure enough, after another week they departed. And, as we had expected all along, within three days Homer Barron was back in town. A neighbor saw the Negro man admit him at the kitchen door at dusk one evening.

And that was the last we saw of Homer Barron. And of Miss Emily for some time. The Negro man went in and out with the market basket, but the front door remained closed. Now and then we would see her at a window for a moment, as the men did that night when they sprinkled the lime, but for almost six months she did not appear on the streets. Then we knew that this was to be expected too; as if that quality of her father which had thwarted her woman's life so many times had been too virulent and too furious to die.

When we next saw Miss Emily, she had grown fat and her hair was turning gray. During the next few years it grew grayer and grayer until it attained an even pepper-and-salt iron-gray, when it ceased turning. Up to the day of her death at seventy-four it was still that vigorous iron-gray, like the hair of an active man.

From that time on her front door remained closed, save for a period of six or seven years, when she was about forty, during which she gave lessons in china-painting. She fitted up a studio in one of the downstairs rooms, where the daughters and granddaughters of Colonel Sartoris' contemporaries were sent to her with the same regularity and in the same spirit that they were sent to church on Sundays with a twenty-five-cent piece for the collection plate. Meanwhile her taxes had been remitted.

Then the newer generation became the backbone and the spirit of the town, and the painting pupils grew up and fell away and did not send their children to her with boxes of color and tedious brushes and pictures cut from the ladies' magazines. The front door closed upon the last one and remained closed for good. When the town got free postal delivery, Miss Emily alone refused to let them fasten the metal numbers above her door and attach a mailbox to it. She would not listen to them.

Daily, monthly, yearly we watched the Negro grow grayer and more stooped, going in and out with the market basket. Each December we sent her a tax notice, which would be returned by the post office a week later, unclaimed. Now and then we would see her in one of the downstairs windows--she had evidently shut up the top floor of the house--like the carven torso of an idol in a niche, looking or not looking at us, we could never tell which. Thus she passed from generation to generation--dear, inescapable, impervious, tranquil, and perverse.

And so she died. Fell ill in the house filled with dust and shadows, with only a doddering Negro man to wait on her. We did not even know she was sick; we had long since given up trying to get any information from the Negro

He talked to no one, probably not even to her, for his voice had grown harsh and rusty, as if from disuse.

She died in one of the downstairs rooms, in a heavy walnut bed with a curtain, her gray head propped on a pillow yellow and moldy with age and lack of sunlight.

**V**

THE NEGRO met the first of the ladies at the front door and let them in, with their hushed, sibilant voices and their quick, curious glances, and then he disappeared. He walked right through the house and out the back and was not seen again.

The two female cousins came at once. They held the funeral on the second day, with the town coming to look at Miss Emily beneath a mass of bought flowers, with the crayon face of her father musing profoundly above the bier and the ladies sibilant and macabre; and the very old men --some in their brushed Confederate uniforms--on the porch and the lawn, talking of Miss Emily as if she had been a contemporary of theirs, believing that they had danced with her and courted her perhaps, confusing time with its mathematical progression, as the old do, to whom all the past is not a diminishing road but, instead, a huge meadow which no winter ever quite touches, divided from them now by the narrow bottle-neck of the most recent decade of years.

Already we knew that there was one room in that region above stairs which no one had seen in forty years, and which would have to be forced. They waited until Miss Emily was decently in the ground before they opened it.

The violence of breaking down the door seemed to fill this room with pervading dust. A thin, acrid pall as of the tomb seemed to lie everywhere upon this room decked and furnished as for a bridal: upon the valance curtains of faded rose color, upon the rose-shaded lights, upon the dressing table, upon the delicate array of crystal and the man's toilet things backed with tarnished silver, silver so tarnished that the monogram was obscured. Among them lay a collar and tie, as if they had just been removed, which, lifted, left upon the surface a pale crescent in the dust. Upon a chair hung the suit, carefully folded; beneath it the two mute shoes and the discarded socks.

The man himself lay in the bed.

For a long while we just stood there, looking down at the profound and fleshless grin. The body had apparently once lain in the attitude of an embrace, but now the long sleep that outlasts love, that conquers even the grimace of love, had cuckolded him. What was left of him, rotted beneath what was left of the nightshirt, had become inextricable from the bed in which he lay; and upon him and upon the pillow beside him lay that even coating of the patient and biding dust.

Then we noticed that in the second pillow was the indentation of a head. One of us lifted something from it, and leaning forward, that faint and invisible dust dry and acrid in the nostrils, we saw a long strand of iron-gray hair.

**Kate Chopin. “Desiree's Baby”**

As the day was pleasant, Madame Valmonde drove over to L'Abri to see Desiree and the baby.

 It made her laugh to think of Desiree with a baby. Why, it seemed but yesterday that Desiree was little more than a baby herself; when Monsieur in riding through the gateway of Valmonde had found her lying asleep in the shadow of the big stone pillar.

 The little one awoke in his arms and began to cry for "Dada." That was as much as she could do or say. Some people thought she might have strayed there of her own accord, for she was of the toddling age. The prevailing belief was that she had been purposely left by a party of Texans, whose canvas-covered wagon, late in the day, had crossed the ferry that Coton Mais kept, just below the plantation. In time Madame Valmonde abandoned every speculation but the one that Desiree had been sent to her by a beneficent Providence to be the child of her affection, seeing that she was without child of the flesh. For the girl grew to be beautiful and gentle, affectionate and sincere - the idol of Valmonde.

 It was no wonder, when she stood one day against the stone pillar in whose shadow she had lain asleep, eighteen years before, that Armand Aubigny riding by and seeing her there, had fallen in love with her. That was the way all the Aubignys fell in love, as if struck by a pistol shot. The wonder was that he had not loved her before; for he had known her since his father brought him home from Paris, a boy of eight, after his mother died there. The passion that awoke in him that day, when he saw her at the gate, swept along like an avalanche, or like a prairie fire, or like anything that drives headlong over all obstacles.

 Monsieur Valmonde grew practical and wanted things well considered: that is, the girl's obscure origin. Armand looked into her eyes and did not care. He was reminded that she was nameless. What did it matter about a name when he could give her one of the oldest and proudest in Louisiana? He ordered the corbeille from Paris, and contained himself with what patience he could until it arrived; then they were married.

 Madame Valmonde had not seen Desiree and the baby for four weeks. When she reached L'Abri she shuddered at the first sight of it, as she always did. It was a sad looking place, which for many years had not known the gentle presence of a mistress, old Monsieur Aubigny having married and buried his wife in France, and she having loved her own land too well ever to leave it. The roof came down steep and black like a cowl, reaching out beyond the wide galleries that encircled the yellow stuccoed house. Big, solemn oaks grew close to it, and their thick-leaved, far-reaching branches shadowed it like a pall. Young Aubigny's rule was a strict one, too, and under it his negroes had forgotten how to be gay, as they had been during the old master's easy-going and indulgent lifetime.

 The young mother was recovering slowly, and lay full length, in her soft white muslins and laces, upon a couch. The baby was beside her, upon her arm, where he had fallen asleep, at her breast. The yellow nurse woman sat beside a window fanning herself.

 Madame Valmonde bent her portly figure over Desiree and kissed her, holding her an instant tenderly in her arms. Then she turned to the child.

 "This is not the baby!" she exclaimed, in startled tones. French was the language spoken at Valmonde in those days.

 "I knew you would be astonished," laughed Desiree, "at the way he has grown. The little cochon de lait! Look at his legs, mamma, and his hands and fingernails - real finger-nails. Zandrine had to cut them this morning. Isn't it true, Zandrine?"

 The woman bowed her turbaned head majestically, "Mais si, Madame."

 "And the way he cries," went on Desiree, "is deafening. Armand heard him the other day as far away as La Blanche's cabin."

 Madame Valmonde had never removed her eyes from the child. She lifted it and walked with it over to the window that was lightest. She scanned the baby narrowly, then looked as searchingly at Zandrine, whose face was turned to gaze across the fields.

 "Yes, the child has grown, has changed," said Madame Valmonde, slowly, as she replaced it beside its mother. "What does Armand say?"

 Desiree's face became suffused with a glow that was happiness itself.

 "Oh, Armand is the proudest father in the parish, I believe, chiefly because it is a boy, to bear his name; though he says not - that he would have loved a girl as well. But I know it isn't true. I know he says that to please me. And mamma," she added, drawing Madame Valmonde's head down to her, and speaking in a whisper, "he hasn't punished one of them - not one of them - since baby is born. Even Negrillon, who pretended to have burnt his leg that he might rest from work - he only laughed, and said Negrillon was a great scamp. Oh, mamma, I'm so happy; it frightens me."

 What Desiree said was true. Marriage, and later the birth of his son had softened Armand Aubigny's imperious and exacting nature greatly. This was what made the gentle Desiree so happy, for she loved him desperately. When he frowned she trembled, but loved him. When he smiled, she asked no greater blessing of God. But Armand's dark, handsome face had not often been disfigured by frowns since the day he fell in love with her.

 When the baby was about three months old, Desiree awoke one day to the conviction that there was something in the air menacing her peace. It was at first too subtle to grasp. It had only been a disquieting suggestion; an air of mystery among the blacks; unexpected visits from far-off neighbors who could hardly account for their coming. Then a strange, an awful change in her husband's manner, which she dared not ask him to explain. When he spoke to her, it was with averted eyes, from which the old love-light seemed to have gone out. He absented himself from home; and when there, avoided her presence and that of her child, without excuse. And the very spirit of Satan seemed suddenly to take hold of him in his dealings with the slaves. Desiree was miserable enough to die.

 She sat in her room, one hot afternoon, in her peignoir, listlessly drawing through her fingers the strands of her long, silky brown hair that hung about her shoulders. The baby, half naked, lay asleep upon her own great mahogany bed, that was like a sumptuous throne, with its satin-lined half-canopy. One of La Blanche's little quadroon boys - half naked too - stood fanning the child slowly with a fan of peacock feathers. Desiree's eyes had been fixed absently and sadly upon the baby, while she was striving to penetrate the threatening mist that she felt closing about her. She looked from her child to the boy who stood beside him, and back again; over and over. "Ah!" It was a cry that she could not help; which she was not conscious of having uttered. The blood turned like ice in her veins, and a clammy moisture gathered upon her face.

 She tried to speak to the little quadroon boy; but no sound would come, at first. When he heard his name uttered, he looked up, and his mistress was pointing to the door. He laid aside the great, soft fan, and obediently stole away, over the polished floor, on his bare tiptoes.

 She stayed motionless, with gaze riveted upon her child, and her face the picture of fright.

 Presently her husband entered the room, and without noticing her, went to a table and began to search among some papers which covered it.

 "Armand," she called to him, in a voice which must have stabbed him, if he was human. But he did not notice. "Armand," she said again. Then she rose and tottered towards him. "Armand," she panted once more, clutching his arm, "look at our child. What does it mean? Tell me."

 He coldly but gently loosened her fingers from about his arm and thrust the hand away from him. "Tell me what it means!" she cried despairingly.

 "It means," he answered lightly, "that the child is not white; it means that you are not white."

 A quick conception of all that this accusation meant for her nerved her with unwonted courage to deny it. "It is a lie; it is not true, I am white! Look at my hair, it is brown; and my eyes are gray, Armand, you know they are gray. And my skin is fair," seizing his wrist. "Look at my hand; whiter than yours, Armand," she laughed hysterically.

 "As white as La Blanche's," he returned cruelly; and went away leaving her alone with their child.

 When she could hold a pen in her hand, she sent a despairing letter to Madame Valmonde.

 "My mother, they tell me I am not white. Armand has told me I am not white. For God's sake tell them it is not true. You must know it is not true. I shall die. I must die. I cannot be so unhappy, and live."

 The answer that came was brief:

 "My own Desiree: Come home to Valmonde; back to your mother who loves you. Come with your child."

 When the letter reached Desiree she went with it to her husband's study, and laid it open upon the desk before which he sat. She was like a stone image: silent, white, motionless after she placed it there.

 In silence he ran his cold eyes over the written words.

 He said nothing. "Shall I go, Armand?" she asked in tones sharp with agonized suspense.

 "Yes, go."

 "Do you want me to go?"

 "Yes, I want you to go."

 He thought Almighty God had dealt cruelly and unjustly with him; and felt, somehow, that he was paying Him back in kind when he stabbed thus into his wife's soul. Moreover he no longer loved her, because of the unconscious injury she had brought upon his home and his name.

She turned away like one stunned by a blow, and walked slowly towards the door, hoping he would call her back.

 "Good-by, Armand," she moaned.

 He did not answer her. That was his last blow at fate.

 Desiree went in search of her child. Zandrine was pacing the sombre gallery with it. She took the little one from the nurse's arms with no word of explanation, and descending the steps, walked away, under the live-oak branches.

 It was an October afternoon; the sun was just sinking. Out in the still fields the negroes were picking cotton.

 Desiree had not changed the thin white garment nor the slippers which she wore. Her hair was uncovered and the sun's rays brought a golden gleam from its brown meshes. She did not take the broad, beaten road which led to the far-off plantation of Valmonde. She walked across a deserted field, where the stubble bruised her tender feet, so delicately shod, and tore her thin gown to shreds.

 She disappeared among the reeds and willows that grew thick along the banks of the deep, sluggish bayou; and she did not come back again.

 Some weeks later there was a curious scene enacted at L'Abri. In the centre of the smoothly swept back yard was a great bonfire. Armand Aubigny sat in the wide hallway that commanded a view of the spectacle; and it was he who dealt out to a half dozen negroes the material which kept this fire ablaze.

 A graceful cradle of willow, with all its dainty furbishings, was laid upon the pyre, which had already been fed with the richness of a priceless layette. Then there were silk gowns, and velvet and satin ones added to these; laces, too, and embroideries; bonnets and gloves; for the corbeille had been of rare quality.

 The last thing to go was a tiny bundle of letters; innocent little scribblings that Desiree had sent to him during the days of their espousal. There was the remnant of one back in the drawer from which he took them. But it was not Desiree's; it was part of an old letter from his mother to his father. He read it. She was thanking God for the blessing of her husband's love:--

 "But above all," she wrote, "night and day, I thank the good God for having so arranged our lives that our dear Armand will never know that his mother, who adores him, belongs to the race that is cursed with the brand of slavery."

**Kate Chopin. “The Story of an Hour”**

Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband's death.

It was her sister Josephine who told her, in broken sentences; veiled hints that revealed in half concealing. Her husband's friend Richards was there, too, near her. It was he who had been in the newspaper office when intelligence of the railroad disaster was received, with Brently Mallard's name leading the list of "killed." He had only taken the time to assure himself of its truth by a second telegram, and had hastened to forestall any less careful, less tender friend in bearing the sad message.

She did not hear the story as many women have heard the same, with a paralyzed inability to accept its significance. She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister's arms. When the storm of grief had spent itself she went away to her room alone. She would have no one follow her.

There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair. Into this she sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul.

She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which some one was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves.

There were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds that had met and piled one above the other in the west facing her window.

She sat with her head thrown back upon the cushion of the chair, quite motionless, except when a sob came up into her throat and shook her, as a child who has cried itself to sleep continues to sob in its dreams.

She was young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength. But now there was a dull stare in her eyes, whose gaze was fixed away off yonder on one of those patches of blue sky. It was not a glance of reflection, but rather indicated a suspension of intelligent thought.

There was something coming to her and she was waiting for it, fearfully. What was it? She did not know; it was too subtle and elusive to name. But she felt it, creeping out of the sky, reaching toward her through the sounds, the scents, the color that filled the air.

Now her bosom rose and fell tumultuously. She was beginning to recognize this thing that was approaching to possess her, and she was striving to beat it back with her will—as powerless as her two white slender hands would have been.

When she abandoned herself a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips. She said it over and over under her breath: "Free, free, free!" The vacant stare and the look of terror that had followed it went from her eyes. They stayed keen and bright. Her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body.

She did not stop to ask if it were or were not a monstrous joy that held her. A clear and exalted perception enabled her to dismiss the suggestion as trivial.

She knew that she would weep again when she saw the kind, tender hands folded in death; the face that had never looked save with love upon her, fixed and gray and dead. But she saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely. And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome.

There would be no one to live for during those coming years; she would live for herself. There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow-creature. A kind intention or a cruel intention made the act seem no less a crime as she looked upon it in that brief moment of illumination.

And yet she had loved him—sometimes. Often she had not. What did it matter! What could love, the unsolved mystery, count for in face of this possession of self-assertion which she suddenly recognized as the strongest impulse of her being!

"Free! Body and soul free!" she kept whispering.

Josephine was kneeling before the closed door with her lips to the keyhole, imploring for admission. "Louise, open the door! I beg, open the door—you will make yourself ill. What are you doing Louise? For heaven's sake open the door."

"Go away. I am not making myself ill." No; she was drinking in a very elixir of life through that open window.

Her fancy was running riot along those days ahead of her. Spring days, and Summer days, and all sorts of days that would be her own. She breathed a quick prayer that life might be long. It was only yesterday she had thought with a shudder that life might be long.

She arose at length and opened the door to her sister's importunities. There was a feverish triumph in her eyes, and she carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory. She clasped her sister's waist, and together they descended the stairs. Richards stood waiting for them at the bottom.

Some one was opening the front door with a latchkey. It was Brently Mallard who entered, a little travel-stained, composedly carrying his grip-sack and umbrella. He had been far from the scene of accident, and did not even know there had been one. He stood amazed at Josephine's piercing cry; at Richards' quick motion to screen him from the view of his wife.

But Richards was too late.

When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease—of joy that kills.

**Richard Wright. “The Ethics of Living Jim Crow”**

My first lesson in how to live as a Negro came when I was quite small. We were living in Arkansas. Our house stood behind the railroad tracks. Its skimpy yard was paved with black cinders. Nothing green ever grew in that yard. The only touch of green we could see was far away, beyond the tracks, over where the white folks lived. But cinders were good enough for me, and I never missed the green growing things. And anyhow, cinders were fine weapons. You could always have a nice hot war with huge black cinders. All you had to do was crouch behind the brick pillars of a house with your hands full of gritty ammunition. And the first woolly black head you saw pop out from behind another row of pillars was your target. You tried your very best to knock it off. It was great fun.

I never fully realized the appalling disadvantages of a cinder environment till one day the gang to which I belonged found itself engaged in a war with the white boys who lived beyond the tracks. As usual we laid down our cinder barrage, thinking that this would wipe the white boys out. But they replied with a steady bombardment of broken bottles. We doubled our cinder barrage, but they hid behind trees, hedges, and the sloping embankments of their lawns. Having no such fortifications, we retreated to the brick pillars of our homes. During the retreat a broken milk bottle caught me behind the ear, opening a deep gash which bled profusely. The sight of blood pouring over my face completely demoralized our ranks. My fellow-combatants left me standing paralyzed in the center of the yard, and scurried for their homes. A kind neighbor saw me and rushed me to a doctor, who took three stitches in my neck.

I sat brooding on my front steps, nursing my wound and waiting for my mother to come from work. I felt that a grave injustice had been done me. It was all right to throw cinders. The greatest harm a cinder could do was leave a bruise. But broken bottles were dangerous; they left you cut, bleeding, and helpless.

When night fell, my mother came from the white folks' kitchen. I raced down the street to meet her. I could just feel in my bones that she would understand. I knew she would tell me exactly what to do next time. I grabbed her hand and babbled out the whole story. She examined my wound, then slapped me.

"How come yuh didn't hide?" she asked me. "How come yuh awways fightin'?"

I was outraged, and bawled. Between sobs I told her that I didn't have any trees or hedges to hide behind. There wasn't a thing I could have used as a trench. And you couldn't throw very far when you were hiding behind the brick pillars of a house. She grabbed a barrel stave, dragged me home, stripped me naked, and beat me till I had a fever of one hundred and two. She would smack my rump with the stave, and, while the skin was still smarting, impart to me gems of Jim Crow wisdom. I was never to throw cinders any more. I was never to fight any more wars. I was never, never, under any conditions, to fight white folks again. And they were absolutely right in clouting me with the broken milk bottle. Didn't I know she was working hard every day in the hot kitchens of the white folks to make money to take care of me? When was I ever going to learn to be a good boy? She couldn't be bothered with my fights. She finished by telling me that I ought to be thankful to God as long as I lived that they didn't kill me.

All that night I was delirious and could not sleep. Each time I closed my eyes I saw monstrous white faces suspended from the ceiling, leering at me.

From that time on, the charm of my cinder yard was gone. The green trees, the trimmed hedges, the cropped lawns grew very meaningful, became a symbol. Even today when I think of white folks, the hard, sharp outlines of white houses surrounded by trees, lawns, and hedges are present somewhere in the background of my mind. Through the years they grew into an overreaching sym- bol of fear.

It was a long time before I came in close contact with white folks again. We moved from Arkansas to Mississippi. Here we had the good fortune not to live behind the railroad tracks, or close to white neighborhoods. We lived in the very heart of the local Black Belt. There were black churches and black preachers; there were black schools and black teachers; black groceries and black clerics. In fact, everything was so solidly black that for a long time I did not even think of white folks, save in remote and vague terms. But this could not last forever. As one grows older one eats more. One's clothing costs more. When I finished grammar school I had to go to work. My mother could no longer feed and clothe me on her cooking job.

There is but one place where a black boy who knows no trade can get a job. And that's where the houses and faces are white, where the trees, lawns, and hedges are green. My first job was with an optical company in Jackson, Mississippi. The morning I applied I stood straight and neat before the boss, answering all his questions with sharp yessirs and nosirs. I was very careful to pronounce my sirs distinctly, in order that he might know that I was polite, that I knew where I was, and that I knew he was a white man. I wanted that job badly.

He looked me over as though he were examining a prize poodle. He questioned me closely about my schooling, being particularly insistent about how much mathematics I had had. He seemed very pleased when I told him I had had two years of algebra.

"Boy, how would you like to try to learn something around here?" he asked me.

"I'd like it fine, sir," I said, happy. I had visions of "working my way up." Even Negroes have those visions.

"All right," he said. "Come on."

I followed him to the small factory.

"Pease," he said to a white man of about thirty-five, "this is Richard. He's going to work for us."

Pease looked at me and nodded.

I was then taken to a white boy of about seventeen.

"Morrie, this is Richard, who's going to work for us."

"Whut yuh sayin' there, boy!" Morrie boomed at me.

"Fine!" I answered.

The boss instructed these two to help me, teach me, give me jobs to do, and let me learn what I could in my spare time.

My wages were five dollars a week.

I worked hard, trying to please. For the first month I got along O.K. Both Pease and Morrie seemed to like me. But one thing was missing. And I kept thinking about it. I was not learning anything, and nobody was volunteering to help me. Thinking they had forgotten that I was to learn something about the mechanics of grinding lenses, I asked Morrie one day to tell me about the work. He grew red.

"Whut yuh tryin' t' do, nigger, git smart?" he asked.

"Naw; I ain' tryin' t' -it smart," I said.

"Well, don't, if yuh know whut's good for yuh!"

I was puzzled. Maybe he just doesn't want to help me, I thought. I went to Pease.

"Say, are you crazy, you black bastard?" Pease asked me, his gray eyes growing hard.

I spoke out, reminding him that the boss had said I was to be given a chance to learn something.

"Nigger, you think you're white, don't you?"

"Naw, sir!"

"Well, you're acting mighty like it!"

"But, Mr. Pease, the boss said . . ."

Pease shook his fist in my face.

"This is a white man's work around here, and you better watch yourself!"

From then on they changed toward me. They said good-morning no more. When I was just a bit slow in performing some duty, I was called a lazy black son-of-a-bitch.

Once I thought of reporting all this to the boss. But the mere idea of what would happen to me if Pease and Morrie should learn that I had "snitched" stopped me. And after all, the boss was a white man, too. What was the use?

The climax came at noon one summer day. Pease called me to his work-bench. To get to him I had to go between two narrow benches and stand with my back against a wall.

"Yes, sir," I said.

"Richard, I want to ask you something," Pease began pleasantly, not looking up from his work.

"Yes, sir," I said again.

Morrie came over, blocking the narrow passage between the benches. He folded his arms, staring at me solemnly.

I looked from one to the other, sensing that something was coming.

"Yes, sir," I said for the third time.

Pease looked up and spoke very slowly.

"Richard, Mr. Morrie here tells me you called me Pease."

I stiffened. A void seemed to open up in me. I knew this was the show-down.

He meant that I had failed to call him Mr. Pease. I looked at Morrie. He was gripping a steel bar in his hands. I opened my mouth to speak, to protest, to assure Pease that I had never called him simply Pease, and that I had never had any intentions of doing so, when Morrie grabbed me by the collar, ramming my head against the wall.

"Now, be careful, nigger!" snarled Morrie, baring his teeth. "1 heard yuh call 'im Pease! 'N' if yuh say yuh didn't, yuh're callin' me a lie, see?" He waved the steel bar threateningly.

If I had said: No, sir, Mr. Pease, I never called you Pease, I would have been automatically calling Morrie a liar. And if I had said: Yes, sir, Mr. Pease, I called you Pease, I would have been pleading guilty to having uttered the worst insult that a Negro can utter to a southern white man. I stood hesitating, trying to frame a neutral reply.

"Richard, I asked you a question!" said Pease. Anger was creeping into his voice.

"I don't remember calling you Pease, Mr. Pease," I said cautiously. "And if I did, I sure didn't mean . . ."

"You black son-of-a-bitch! You called me Pease, then!" he spat, slapping me till I bent sideways over a bench. Morrie was on top of me, demanding:

"Didn't yuh call 'im Pease? If yuh say yuh didn't, I'll rip yo' gut string loose with this f--kin' bar, yuh black granny dodger! Yuh can't call a white man a lie 'n' git erway with it, you black son-of-a-bitch!"

I wilted. I begged them not to bother me. I knew what they wanted. They wanted me to leave.

"I'll leave," I promised. "I'll leave right now."

They gave me a minute to get out of the factory. I was warned not to show up again, or tell the boss.

I went.

When I told the folks at home what had happened, they called me a fool. They told me that I must never again attempt to exceed my boundaries. When you are working for white folks, they said, you got to "stay in your place" if you want to keep working.

My Jim Crow education continued on my next job, which was portering in a clothing store. One morning, while polishing brass out front, the boss and his twenty-year-old son got out of their car and half dragged and half kicked a Negro woman into the store. A policeman standing at the corner looked on, twirling his nightstick. I watched out of the corner of my eye, never slackening the strokes of my chamois upon the brass. After a few minutes, I heard shrill screams coming from the rear of the store. Later the woman stumbled out, bleeding, crying, and holding her stomach. When she reached the end of the block, the policeman grabbed her and accused her of being drunk. Silently I watched him throw her into a patrol wagon.

When I went to the rear of the store, the boss and his son were washing their hands at the sink. They were chuckling. The floor was bloody, and strewn with wisps of hair and clothing. No doubt I must have appeared pretty shocked, for the boss slapped me reassuringly on the back.

"Boy, that's what we do to niggers when they don't want to pay their bills," he said, laughing.

His son looked at me and grinned.

"Here, hava cigarette," he said.

Not knowing what to do, I took it. He lit his and held the match for me. This was a gesture of kindness, indicating that even if they had beaten the poor old woman, they would not beat rif I knew enough to keep my mouth shut.

"Yes, sir," I said, and asked no questions.

After they had gone, I sat on the edge of a packing box and stared at the bloody floor till the cigarette went out.

That day at noon, while eating in a hamburger joint, I told my fellow Negro porters what had happened. No one seemed surprised. One fellow, after swallowing a huge bite, turned to me and asked

"Huh. Is tha' all they did t' her?"

"Yeah. Wasn't tha' enough?" I asked.

"Shucks! Man, she's a lucky bitch!" he said, burying his lips deep into a juicy hamburger. "Hell, it's a wonder they didn't lay her when they got through."

I was learning fast, but not quite fast enough. One day, while I was delivering packages in the suburbs, my bicycle tire was punctured. I walked along the hot, dusty road, sweating and leading my bicycle by the handle-bars.

A car slowed at my side.

"What's the matter, boy?" a white man called.

I told him my bicycle was broken and I was walking back to town.

"That's too bad," he said. "Hop on the running board."

He stopped the car. I clutched hard at my bicycle with one hand and clung to the side of the car with the other.

"All set?"

"Yes, sir," I answered. The car started.

It was full of young white men. They were drinking. I watched the flask pass from mouth to mouth.

"Wanna drink, boy?" one asked.

I laughed, the wind whipping my face. Instinctively obeying the freshly planted precepts of my mother, I said:

"Oh, no!"

The words were hardly out of my mouth before I felt something hard and cold smash me between the eyes. It was an empty whisky bottle. I saw stars, and fell backwards from the speeding car into the dust of the road, my feet becoming entangled in the steel spokes of my bicycle. The white men piled out, and stood over me.

"Nigger, ain' yuh learned no better sense'n tha' yet?" asked the man who hit me. "Ain' yuh learned t' say sir t' a white man yet?"

Dazed, I pulled to my feet. My elbows and legs were bleeding. Fists doubled, the white man advanced, kicking my bicycle out of the way.

"Aw, leave the bastard alone. He's got enough," said one.

They stood looking at me. I rubbed my shins, trying to stop the flow of blood. No doubt they felt a sort of contemptuous pity, for one asked:

"Yuh wanna ride t' town now, nigger? Yuh reckon yuh know enough t' ride now?"

"I wanna walk," I said, simply.

Maybe it sounded funny. They laughed.

"Well, walk, yuh black son-of-a-bitch!"

When they left they comforted me with:

"Nigger, yuh sho better be damn glad it wuz us yuh talked t' tha' way. Yuh're a lucky bastard, 'cause if yuh'd said tha' t' somebody else, yuh might've been a dead nigger now."

Negroes who have lived South know the dread of being caught alone upon the streets in white neighborhoods after the sun has set. In such a simple situation as this the plight of the Negro in America is graphically symbolized. While white strangers may be in these neighborhoods trying to get home, they can pass unmolested. But the color of a Negro's skin makes him easily recognizable, makes him suspect, converts him into a defenseless target.

Late one Saturday night I made some deliveries in a white neighborhood. I was pedaling my bicycle back to the store as fast as I could, when a police car, swerving toward me, jammed me into the curbing.

"Get down and put up your hands!" the policemen ordered.

I did. They climbed out of the car, guns drawn, faces set, and advanced slowly.

"Keep still!" they ordered.

I reached my hands higher. They searched my pockets and packages. They seemed dissatisfied when they could find nothing incriminating. Finally, one of them said:

"Boy, tell your boss not to send you out in white neighborhoods this time of night."

As usual, I said:

"Yes, sir."

My next job was as hall-boy in a hotel. Here my Jim Crow education broadened and deepened. When the bell-boys were busy, I was often called to assist them. As many of the rooms in the hotel were occupied by prostitutes, I was constantly called to carry them liquor and cigarettes. These women were nude most of the time. They did not bother about clothing even for bell-boys. When you went into their rooms, you were supposed to take their nakedness for granted, as though it startled you no more than a blue vase or a red rug. Your presence awoke in them no sense of shame, for you were not regarded as human. If they were alone, you could steal sidelong glimpses at them. But if they were receiving men, not a flicker of your eyelids must show. I remember one incident vividly. A new woman, a huge, snowy-skinned blonde, took a room on my floor. I was sent to wait upon her. She was in bed with a thick-set man; both were nude and uncovered. She said she wanted some liquor, and slid out of bed and waddled across the floor to get her money from a dresser drawer. I watched her.

"Nigger, what in hell you looking at?" the white man asked me, raising himself upon his elbows.

"Nothing," I answered, looking miles deep into the blank wall of the room.

"Keep your eyes where they belong, if you want to be healthy!"

"Yes, sir," I said.

One of the bell-boys I knew in this hotel was keeping steady company with one of the Negro maids. Out of a clear sky the police descended upon his home and arrested him, accusing him of bastardy. The poor boy swore he had had no intimate relations with the girl. Nevertheless, they forced him to marry her. When the child arrived, it was found to be much lighter in complexion than either of the two supposedly legal parents. The white men around the hotel made a great joke of it. They spread the rumor that some white cow must have scared the poor girl while she was carrying the baby. If you were in their presence when this explanation was offered, you were supposed to laugh.

One of the bell-boys was caught in bed with a white prostitute. He was castrated, and run out of town. Immediately after this all the bell-boys and hall-boys were called together and warned. We were given to understand that the boy who had been castrated was a "mighty, mighty lucky bastard." We were impressed with the fact that next time the management of the hotel would not be responsible for the lives of "trouble-makin' niggers."

One night, just as I was about to go home, I met one of the Negro maids. She lived in my direction, and we fell in to walk part of the way home together. As we passed the white nightwatchman, he slapped the maid on her buttock. I turned around, amazed. The watchman looked at me with a long, hard, fixedunder stare. Suddenly he pulled his gun, and asked:

"Nigger, don't yuh like it?"

I hesitated.

"I asked yuh don't yuh like it?" he asked again, stepping forward.

"Yes, sir," I mumbled.

"Talk like it, then!"

"Oh, yes, sir!" I said with as much heartiness as I could muster.

Outside, I walked ahead of the girl, ashamed to face her. She caught up with me and said:

"Don't be a fool; yuh couldn't help it!"

This watchman boasted of having killed two Negroes in self-defense.

Yet, in spite of all this, the life of the hotel ran with an amazing smoothness. It would have been impossible for a stranger to detect anything. The maids, the hall-boys, and the bell-boys were all smiles. They had to be.

I had learned my Jim Crow lessons so thoroughly that I kept the hotel job till I left Jackson for Memphis. It so happened that while in Memphis I applied for a job at a branch of the optical company. I was hired. And for some reason, as long as I worked there, they never brought my past against me.

Here my Jim Crow education assumed quite a different form. It was no longer brutally cruel, but subtly cruel. Here I learned to lie, to steal, to dissemble. I learned to play that dual role which every Negro must play if he wants to eat and live.

For example, it was almost impossible to get a book to read. It was assumed that after a Negro had imbibed what scanty schooling the state furnished he had no further need for books. I was always borrowing books from men on the job. One day I mustered enough courage to ask one of the men to let me get books from the library in his name. Surprisingly, he consented. I cannot help but think that he consented because he was a Roman Catholic and felt a vague sympathy for Negroes, being himself an object of hatred. Armed with a library card, I obtained books in the following manner: I would write a note to the librarian, saying: "Please let this nigger boy have the following books." I would then sign it with the white man's name.

When I went to the library, I would stand at the desk, hat in hand, looking as unbookish as possible. When I received the books desired I would take them home. If the books listed in the note happened to be out, I would sneak into the lobby and forge a new one. I never took any chances guessing with the white librarian about what the fictitious white man would want to read. No doubt if any of the white patrons had suspected that some of the volumes they enjoyed had been in the home of a Negro, they would not have tolerated it for an instant.

The factory force of the optical company in Memphis was much larger than that in Jackson, and more urbanized. At least they liked to talk, and would engage the Negro help in conversation whenever possible. By this means I found that many subjects were taboo from the white man's point of view. Among the topics they did not like to discuss with Negroes were the following: American white women; the Ku Klux Klan; France, and how Negro soldiers fared while there; French women; Jack Johnson; the entire northern part of the United States; the Civil War; Abraham Lincoln; U. S. Grant; General Sherman; Catholics; the Pope; Jews; the Republican Party; slavery; social equality; Communism; Socialism; the 13th and 14th Amendments to the Constitution; or any topic calling for positive knowledge or manly self-assertion on the part of the Negro. The most accepted topics were sex and religion.

There were many times when I had to exercise a great deal of ingenuity to keep out of trouble. It is a southern custom that all men must take off their hats when they enter an elevator. And especially did this apply to us blacks with rigid force. One day I stepped into an elevator with my arms full of packages. I was forced to ride with my hat on. Two white men stared at me coldly. Then one of them very kindly lifted my hat and placed it upon my armful of packages. Now the most accepted response for a Negro to make under such circumstances is to look at the white man out of the corner of his eye and grin. To have said: "Thank you!" would have made the white man think that you thought you were receiving from him a personal service. For such an act I have seen Negroes take a blow in the mouth. Finding the first alternative distasteful, and the second dangerous, I hit upon an acceptable course of action which fell safely between these two poles. I immediately-no sooner than my hat was lifted-pretended that my packages were about to spill, and appeared deeply distressed with keeping them in my arms. In this fashion I evaded having to acknowledge his service, and, in spite of adverse circumstances, salvaged a slender shred of personal pride.

How do Negroes feel about the way they have to live? How do they discuss it when alone among themselves? I think this question can be answered in a single sentence. A friend of mine who ran an elevator once told me:

"Lawd, man! Ef it wuzn't fer them polices 'n' them of lynchmobs, there wouldn't be nothin' but uproar down here!"

**Langston Hughes. “The Weary Blues”**

1 Droning a drowsy syncopated tune,

2 Rocking back and forth to a mellow croon,

3 I heard a Negro play.

4 Down on Lenox Avenue the other night

5 By the pale dull pallor of an old gas light

6 He did a lazy sway ....

7 He did a lazy sway ....

8 To the tune o' those Weary Blues.

9 With his ebony hands on each ivory key

10 He made that poor piano moan with melody.

11 O Blues!

12 Swaying to and fro on his rickety stool

13 He played that sad raggy tune like a musical fool.

14 Sweet Blues!

15 Coming from a black man's soul.

16 O Blues!

17 In a deep song voice with a melancholy tone

18 I heard that Negro sing, that old piano moan--

19 "Ain't got nobody in all this world,

20 Ain't got nobody but ma self.

21 I's gwine to quit ma frownin'

22 And put ma troubles on the shelf."

23 Thump, thump, thump, went his foot on the floor.

24 He played a few chords then he sang some more--

25 "I got the Weary Blues

26 And I can't be satisfied.

27 Got the Weary Blues

28 And can't be satisfied--

29 I ain't happy no mo'

30 And I wish that I had died."

31 And far into the night he crooned that tune.

32 The stars went out and so did the moon.

33 The singer stopped playing and went to bed

34 While the Weary Blues echoed through his head.

35 He slept like a rock or a man that's dead.

**James Joyce. “Araby”**

North Richmond Street, being blind, was a quiet street except at the hour when the Christian Brothers' School set the boys free. An uninhabited house of two storeys stood at the blind end, detached from its neighbours in a square ground. The other houses of the street, conscious of decent lives within them, gazed at one another with brown imperturbable faces.

The former tenant of our house, a priest, had died in the back drawing-room. Air, musty from having been long enclosed, hung in all the rooms, and the waste room behind the kitchen was littered with old useless papers. Among these I found a few paper-covered books, the pages of which were curled and damp: The Abbot, by Walter Scott, The Devout Communicant, and The Memoirs of Vidocq. I liked the last best because its leaves were yellow. The wild garden behind the house contained a central apple-tree and a few straggling bushes, under one of which I found the late tenant's rusty bicycle-pump. He had been a very charitable priest; in his will he had left all his money to institutions and the furniture of his house to his sister.

When the short days of winter came, dusk fell before we had well eaten our dinners. When we met in the street the houses had grown sombre. The space of sky above us was the colour of ever-changing violet and towards it the lamps of the street lifted their feeble lanterns. The cold air stung us and we played till our bodies glowed. Our shouts echoed in the silent street. The career of our play brought us through the dark muddy lanes behind the houses, where we ran the gauntlet of the rough tribes from the cottages, to the back doors of the dark dripping gardens where odours arose from the ashpits, to the dark odorous stables where a coachman smoothed and combed the horse or shook music from the buckled harness. When we returned to the street, light from the kitchen windows had filled the areas. If my uncle was seen turning the corner, we hid in the shadow until we had seen him safely housed. Or if Mangan's sister came out on the doorstep to call her brother in to his tea, we watched her from our shadow peer up and down the street. We waited to see whether she would remain or go in and, if she remained, we left our shadow and walked up to Mangan's steps resignedly. She was waiting for us, her figure defined by the light from the half-opened door. Her brother always teased her before he obeyed, and I stood by the railings looking at her. Her dress swung as she moved her body, and the soft rope of her hair tossed from side to side.

Every morning I lay on the floor in the front parlour watching her door. The blind was pulled down to within an inch of the sash so that I could not be seen. When she came out on the doorstep my heart leaped. I ran to the hall, seized my books and followed her. I kept her brown figure always in my eye and, when we came near the point at which our ways diverged, I quickened my pace and passed her. This happened morning after morning. I had never spoken to her, except for a few casual words, and yet her name was like a summons to all my foolish blood.

Her image accompanied me even in places the most hostile to romance. On Saturday evenings when my aunt went marketing I had to go to carry some of the parcels. We walked through the flaring streets, jostled by drunken men and bargaining women, amid the curses of labourers, the shrill litanies of shop-boys who stood on guard by the barrels of pigs' cheeks, the nasal chanting of street-singers, who sang a come-all-you about O'Donovan Rossa, or a ballad about the troubles in our native land. These noises converged in a single sensation of life for me: I imagined that I bore my chalice safely through a throng of foes. Her name sprang to my lips at moments in strange prayers and praises which I myself did not understand. My eyes were often full of tears (I could not tell why) and at times a flood from my heart seemed to pour itself out into my bosom. I thought little of the future. I did not know whether I would ever speak to her or not or, if I spoke to her, how I could tell her of my confused adoration. But my body was like a harp and her words and gestures were like fingers running upon the wires.

One evening I went into the back drawing-room in which the priest had died. It was a dark rainy evening and there was no sound in the house. Through one of the broken panes I heard the rain impinge upon the earth, the fine incessant needles of water playing in the sodden beds. Some distant lamp or lighted window gleamed below me. I was thankful that I could see so little. All my senses seemed to desire to veil themselves and, feeling that I was about to slip from them, I pressed the palms of my hands together until they trembled, murmuring: 'O love! O love!' many times.

At last she spoke to me. When she addressed the first words to me I was so confused that I did not know what to answer. She asked me was I going to Araby. I forgot whether I answered yes or no. It would be a splendid bazaar; she said she would love to go.

'And why can't you?' I asked.

While she spoke she turned a silver bracelet round and round her wrist. She could not go, she said, because there would be a retreat that week in her convent. Her brother and two other boys were fighting for their caps, and I was alone at the railings. She held one of the spikes, bowing her head towards me. The light from the lamp opposite our door caught the white curve of her neck, lit up her hair that rested there and, falling, lit up the hand upon the railing. It fell over one side of her dress and caught the white border of a petticoat, just visible as she stood at ease.

'It's well for you,' she said.

'If I go,' I said, 'I will bring you something.'

What innumerable follies laid waste my waking and sleeping thoughts after that evening! I wished to annihilate the tedious intervening days. I chafed against the work of school. At night in my bedroom and by day in the classroom her image came between me and the page I strove to read. The syllables of the word Araby were called to me through the silence in which my soul luxuriated and cast an Eastern enchantment over me. I asked for leave to go to the bazaar on Saturday night. My aunt was surprised, and hoped it was not some Freemason affair. I answered few questions in class. I watched my master's face pass from amiability to sternness; he hoped I was not beginning to idle. I could not call my wandering thoughts together. I had hardly any patience with the serious work of life which, now that it stood between me and my desire, seemed to me child's play, ugly monotonous child's play.

On Saturday morning I reminded my uncle that I wished to go to the bazaar in the evening. He was fussing at the hallstand, looking for the hat-brush, and answered me curtly:

'Yes, boy, I know.'

As he was in the hall I could not go into the front parlour and lie at the window. I felt the house in bad humour and walked slowly towards the school. The air was pitilessly raw and already my heart misgave me.

When I came home to dinner my uncle had not yet been home. Still it was early. I sat staring at the clock for some time and, when its ticking began to irritate me, I left the room. I mounted the staircase and gained the upper part of the house. The high, cold, empty, gloomy rooms liberated me and I went from room to room singing. From the front window I saw my companions playing below in the street. Their cries reached me weakened and indistinct and, leaning my forehead against the cool glass, I looked over at the dark house where she lived. I may have stood there for an hour, seeing nothing but the brown-clad figure cast by my imagination, touched discreetly by the lamplight at the curved neck, at the hand upon the railings and at the border below the dress.

When I came downstairs again I found Mrs Mercer sitting at the fire. She was an old, garrulous woman, a pawnbroker's widow, who collected used stamps for some pious purpose. I had to endure the gossip of the tea-table. The meal was prolonged beyond an hour and still my uncle did not come. Mrs Mercer stood up to go: she was sorry she couldn't wait any longer, but it was after eight o'clock and she did not like to be out late, as the night air was bad for her. When she had gone I began to walk up and down the room, clenching my fists. My aunt said:

'I'm afraid you may put off your bazaar for this night of Our Lord.'

At nine o'clock I heard my uncle's latchkey in the hall door. I heard him talking to himself and heard the hallstand rocking when it had received the weight of his overcoat. I could interpret these signs. When he was midway through his dinner I asked him to give me the money to go to the bazaar. He had forgotten.

'The people are in bed and after their first sleep now,' he said.

I did not smile. My aunt said to him energetically:

'Can't you give him the money and let him go? You've kept him late enough as it is.'

My uncle said he was very sorry he had forgotten. He said he believed in the old saying: 'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.' He asked me where I was going and, when I told him a second time, he asked me did I know The Arab's Farewell to his Steed. When I left the kitchen he was about to recite the opening lines of the piece to my aunt.

I held a florin tightly in my hand as I strode down Buckingham Street towards the station. The sight of the streets thronged with buyers and glaring with gas recalled to me the purpose of my journey. I took my seat in a third-class carriage of a deserted train. After an intolerable delay the train moved out of the station slowly. It crept onward among ruinous houses and over the twinkling river. At Westland Row Station a crowd of people pressed to the carriage doors; but the porters moved them back, saying that it was a special train for the bazaar. I remained alone in the bare carriage. In a few minutes the train drew up beside an improvised wooden platform. I passed out on to the road and saw by the lighted dial of a clock that it was ten minutes to ten. In front of me was a large building which displayed the magical name.

I could not find any sixpenny entrance and, fearing that the bazaar would be closed, I passed in quickly through a turnstile, handing a shilling to a weary-looking man. I found myself in a big hall girded at half its height by a gallery. Nearly all the stalls were closed and the greater part of the hall was in darkness. I recognized a silence like that which pervades a church after a service. I walked into the centre of the bazaar timidly. A few people were gathered about the stalls which were still open. Before a curtain, over which the words Café Chantant were written in coloured lamps, two men were counting money on a salver. I listened to the fall of the coins.

Remembering with difficulty why I had come, I went over to one of the stalls and examined porcelain vases and flowered tea-sets. At the door of the stall a young lady was talking and laughing with two young gentlemen. I remarked their English accents and listened vaguely to their conversation.

'O, I never said such a thing!'

'O, but you did!'

'O, but I didn't!'

'Didn't she say that?'

'Yes. I heard her.'

'O, there's a... fib!'

Observing me, the young lady came over and asked me did I wish to buy anything. The tone of her voice was not encouraging; she seemed to have spoken to me out of a sense of duty. I looked humbly at the great jars that stood like eastern guards at either side of the dark entrance to the stall and murmured:

'No, thank you.'

The young lady changed the position of one of the vases and went back to the two young men. They began to talk of the same subject. Once or twice the young lady glanced at me over her shoulder.

I lingered before her stall, though I knew my stay was useless, to make my interest in her wares seem the more real. Then I turned away slowly and walked down the middle of the bazaar. I allowed the two pennies to fall against the sixpence in my pocket. I heard a voice call from one end of the gallery that the light was out. The upper part of the hall was now completely dark.

Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger.

**D. H. Lawrence. “The Rocking-Horse Winner”**

There was a woman who was beautiful, who started with all the advantages, yet she had no luck. She married for love, and the love turned to dust. She had bonny children, yet she felt they had been thrust upon her, and she could not love them. They looked at her coldly, as if they were finding fault with her. And hurriedly she felt she must cover up some fault in herself. Yet what it was that she must cover up she never knew. Nevertheless, when her children were present, she always felt the centre of her heart go hard. This troubled her, and in her manner she was all the more gentle and anxious for her children, as if she loved them very much. Only she herself knew that at the centre of her heart was a hard little place that could not feel love, no, not for anybody. Everybody else said of her: “She is such a good mother. She adores her children.” Only she herself, and her children themselves, knew it was not so. They read it in each other’s eyes.

There were a boy and two little girls. They lived in a pleasant house, with a garden, and they had discreet servants, and felt themselves superior to anyone in the neighbourhood.

Although they lived in style, they felt always an anxiety in the house. There was never enough money. The mother had a small income, and the father had a small income, but not nearly enough for the social position which they had to keep up. The father went in to town to some office. But though he had good prospects, these prospects never materialised. There was always the grinding sense of the shortage of money, though the style was always kept up.

At last the mother said, “I will see if I can’t make something.” But she did not know where to begin. She racked her brains, and tried this thing and the other, but could not find anything successful. The failure made deep lines come into her face. Her children were growing up, they would have to go to school. There must be more money, there must be more money. The father, who was always very handsome and expensive in his tastes, seemed as if he never WOULD be able to do anything worth doing. And the mother, who had a great belief in herself, did not succeed any better, and her tastes were just as expensive.

And so the house came to be haunted by the unspoken phrase: There must be more money! There must be more money! The children could hear it all the time, though nobody said it aloud. They heard it at Christmas, when the expensive and splendid toys filled the nursery. Behind the shining modern rocking-horse, behind the smart doll’s-house, a voice would start whispering: “There MUST be more money! There MUST be more money!” And the children would stop playing, to listen for a moment. They would look into each other’s eyes, to see if they had all heard. And each one saw in the eyes of the other two that they too had heard. “There MUST be more money! There MUST be more money!”

It came whispering from the springs of the still-swaying rocking-horse, and even the horse, bending his wooden, champing head, heard it. The big doll, sitting so pink and smirking in her new pram, could hear it quite plainly, and seemed to be smirking all the more self-consciously because of it. The foolish puppy, too, that took the place of the teddy-bear, he was looking so extraordinarily foolish for no other reason but that he heard the secret whisper all over the house: “There MUST be more money.”

Yet nobody ever said it aloud. The whisper was everywhere, and therefore no one spoke it. Just as no one ever says: “We are breathing!” in spite of the fact that breath is coming and going all the time.

“Mother!” said the boy Paul one day. “Why don’t we keep a car of our own? Why do we always use uncle’s, or else a taxi?”

“Because we’re the poor members of the family,” said the mother.

“But why ARE we, mother?”

“Well — I suppose,” she said slowly and bitterly, “it’s because your father has no luck.”

The boy was silent for some time.

“Is luck money, mother?” he asked, rather timidly.

“No, Paul! Not quite. It’s what causes you to have money.”

“Oh!” said Paul vaguely. “I thought when Uncle Oscar said filthy lucker, it meant money.”

“Filthy lucre does mean money,” said the mother. “But it’s lucre, not luck.”

“Oh!” said the boy. “Then what IS luck, mother?”

“It’s what causes you to have money. If you’re lucky you have money. That’s why it’s better to be born lucky than rich. If you’re rich, you may lose your money. But if you’re lucky, you will always get more money.”

“Oh! Will you! And is father not lucky?”

“Very unlucky, I should say,” she said bitterly.

The boy watched her with unsure eyes.

“Why?” he asked.

“I don’t know. Nobody ever knows why one person is lucky and another unlucky.”

“Don’t they? Nobody at all? Does NOBODY know?”

“Perhaps God! But He never tells.”

“He ought to, then. And aren’t you lucky either, mother?”

“I can’t be, if I married an unlucky husband.”

“But by yourself, aren’t you?”

“I used to think I was, before I married. Now I think I am very unlucky indeed.”

“Why?”

“Well — never mind! Perhaps I’m not really,” she said.

The child looked at her, to see if she meant it. But he saw, by the lines of her mouth, that she was only trying to hide something from him.

“Well, anyhow,” he said stoutly, “I’m a lucky person.”

“Why?” said his mother, with a sudden laugh.

He stared at her. He didn’t even know why he had said it.

“God told me,” he asserted, brazening it out.

“I hope He did, dear!” she said, again with a laugh, but rather bitter.

“He did, mother!”

“Excellent!” said the mother, using one of her husband’s exclamations.

The boy saw she did not believe him; or rather, that she paid no attention to his assertion. This angered him somewhere, and made him want to compel her attention.

He went off by himself, vaguely, in a childish way, seeking for the clue to “luck”. Absorbed, taking no heed of other people, he went about with a sort of stealth, seeking inwardly for luck. He wanted luck, he wanted it, he wanted it. When the two girls were playing dolls, in the nursery, he would sit on his big rocking-horse, charging madly into space, with a frenzy that made the little girls peer at him uneasily. Wildly the horse careered, the waving dark hair of the boy tossed, his eyes had a strange glare in them. The little girls dared not speak to him.

When he had ridden to the end of his mad little journey, he climbed down and stood in front of his rocking-horse, staring fixedly into its lowered face. Its red mouth was slightly open, its big eye was wide and glassy bright.

“Now!” he would silently command the snorting steed. “Now take me to where there is luck! Now take me!”

And he would slash the horse on the neck with the little whip he had asked Uncle Oscar for. He KNEW the horse could take him to where there was luck, if only he forced it. So he would mount again, and start on his furious ride, hoping at last to get there. He knew he could get there.

“You’ll break your horse, Paul!” said the nurse.

“He’s always riding like that! I wish he’d leave off!” said his elder sister Joan.

But he only glared down on them in silence. Nurse gave him up. She could make nothing of him. Anyhow he was growing beyond her.

One day his mother and his Uncle Oscar came in when he was on one of his furious rides. He did not speak to them.

“Hallo! you young jockey! Riding a winner?” said his uncle.

“Aren’t you growing too big for a rocking-horse? You’re not a very little boy any longer, you know,” said his mother.

But Paul only gave a blue glare from his big, rather close-set eyes. He would speak to nobody when he was in full tilt. His mother watched him with an anxious expression on her face.

At last he suddenly stopped forcing his horse into the mechanical gallop, and slid down.

“Well, I got there!” he announced fiercely, his blue eyes still flaring, and his sturdy long legs straddling apart.

“Where did you get to?” asked his mother.

“Where I wanted to go to,” he flared back at her.

“That’s right, son!” said Uncle Oscar. “Don’t you stop till you get there. What’s the horse’s name?”

“He doesn’t have a name,” said the boy.

“Gets on without all right?” asked the uncle.

“Well, he has different names. He was called Sansovino last week.”

“Sansovino, eh? Won the Ascot. How did you know his name?”

“He always talks about horse-races with Bassett,” said Joan.

The uncle was delighted to find that his small nephew was posted with all the racing news. Bassett, the young gardener who had been wounded in the left foot in the war, and had got his present job through Oscar Cresswell, whose batman he had been, was a perfect blade of the “turf”. He lived in the racing events, and the small boy lived with him.

Oscar Cresswell got it all from Bassett.

“Master Paul comes and asks me, so I can’t do more than tell him, sir,” said Bassett, his face terribly serious, as if he were speaking of religious matters.

“And does he ever put anything on a horse he fancies?”

“Well — I don’t want to give him away — he’s a young sport, a fine sport, sir. Would you mind asking him himself? He sort of takes a pleasure in it, and perhaps he’d feel I was giving him away, sir, if you don’t mind.”

Bassett was serious as a church.

The uncle went back to his nephew, and took him off for a ride in the car.

“Say, Paul, old man, do you ever put anything on a horse?” the uncle asked.

The boy watched the handsome man closely.

“Why, do you think I oughtn’t to?” he parried.

“Not a bit of it! I thought perhaps you might give me a tip for the Lincoln.”

The car sped on into the country, going down to Uncle Oscar’s place in Hampshire.

“Honour bright?” said the nephew.

“Honour bright, son!” said the uncle.

“Well, then, Daffodil.”

“Daffodil! I doubt it, sonny. What about Mirza?”

“I only know the winner,” said the boy. “That’s Daffodil!”

“Daffodil, eh?” There was a pause. Daffodil was an obscure horse comparatively.

“Uncle!”

“Yes, son?”

“You won’t let it go any further, will you? I promised Bassett.”

“Bassett be damned, old man! What’s he got to do with it?”

“We’re partners! We’ve been partners from the first! Uncle, he lent me my first five shillings, which I lost. I promised him, honour bright, it was only between me and him: only you gave me that ten-shilling note I started winning with, so I thought you were lucky. You won’t let it go any further, will you?”

The boy gazed at his uncle from those big, hot, blue eyes, set rather close together. The uncle stirred and laughed uneasily.

“Right you are, son! I’ll keep your tip private. Daffodil, eh! How much are you putting on him?”

“All except twenty pounds,” said the boy. “I keep that in reserve.”

The uncle thought it a good joke.

“You keep twenty pounds in reserve, do you, you young romancer? What are you betting, then?”

“I’m betting three hundred,” said the boy gravely. “But it’s between you and me, Uncle Oscar! Honour bright?”

The uncle burst into a roar of laughter.

“It’s between you and me all right, you young Nat Gould,” he said, laughing. “But where’s your three hundred?”

“Bassett keeps it for me. We’re partners.”

“You are, are you! And what is Bassett putting on Daffodil?”

“He won’t go quite as high as I do, I expect. Perhaps he’ll go a hundred and fifty.”

“What, pennies?” laughed the uncle.

“Pounds,” said the child, with a surprised look at his uncle. “Bassett keeps a bigger reserve than I do.”

Between wonder and amusement, Uncle Oscar was silent. He pursued the matter no further, but he determined to take his nephew with him to the Lincoln races.

“Now, son,” he said, “I’m putting twenty on Mirza, and I’ll put five for you on any horse you fancy. What’s your pick?”

“Daffodil, uncle!”

“No, not the fiver on Daffodil!”

“I should if it was my own fiver,” said the child.

“Good! Good! Right you are! A fiver for me and a fiver for you on Daffodil.”

The child had never been to a race-meeting before, and his eyes were blue fire. He pursed his mouth tight, and watched. A Frenchman just in front had put his money on Lancelot. Wild with excitement, he flayed his arms up and down, yelling ‘Lancelot! Lancelot’ in his French accent.

Daffodil came in first, Lancelot second, Mirza third. The child, flushed and with eyes blazing, was curiously serene. His uncle brought him five five-pound notes: four to one.

“What am I to do with these?” he cried, waving them before the boy’s eyes.

“I suppose we’ll talk to Bassett,” said the boy. “I expect I have fifteen hundred now: and twenty in reserve: and this twenty.”

His uncle studied him for some moments.

“Look here, son!” he said. “You’re not serious about Bassett and that fifteen hundred, are you?”

“Yes, I am. But it’s between you and me, uncle! Honour bright!”

“Honour bright all right, son! But I must talk to Bassett.”

“If you’d like to be a partner, uncle, with Bassett and me, we could all be partners. Only you’d have to promise, honour bright, uncle, not to let it go beyond us three. Bassett and I are lucky, and you must be lucky, because it was your ten shillings I started winning with . . .”

Uncle Oscar took both Bassett and Paul into Richmond Park for an afternoon, and there they talked.

“It’s like this, you see, sir,” Bassett said. “Master Paul would get me talking about racing events, spinning yarns, you know, sir. And he was always keen on knowing if I’d made or if I’d lost. It’s about a year since, now, that I put five shillings on Blush of Dawn for him: and we lost. Then the luck turned, with that ten shillings he had from you: that we put on Singhalese. And since that time, it’s been pretty steady, all things considering. What do you say, Master Paul?”

“We’re all right when we’re SURE,” said Paul. “It’s when we’re not quite sure that we go down.”

“Oh, but we’re careful then,” said Bassett.

“But when are you SURE?” smiled Uncle Oscar.

“It’s Master Paul, sir,” said Bassett, in a secret, religious voice. “It’s as if he had it from heaven. Like Daffodil now, for the Lincoln. That was as sure as eggs.”

“Did you put anything on Daffodil?” asked Oscar Cresswell.

“Yes, sir. I made my bit.”

“And my nephew?”

Bassett was obstinately silent, looking at Paul.

“I made twelve hundred, didn’t I, Bassett? I told uncle I was putting three hundred on Daffodil.”

“That’s right,” said Bassett, nodding.

“But where’s the money?” asked the uncle.

“I keep it safe locked up, sir. Master Paul, he can have it any minute he likes to ask for it.”

“What, fifteen hundred pounds?”

“And twenty! And FORTY, that is, with the twenty he made on the course.”

“It’s amazing!” said the uncle.

“If Master Paul offers you to be partners, sir, I would, if I were you: if you’ll excuse me,” said Bassett.

Oscar Cresswell thought about it.

“I’ll see the money,” he said.

They drove home again, and sure enough, Bassett came round to the garden-house with fifteen hundred pounds in notes. The twenty pounds reserve was left with Joe Glee, in the Turf Commission deposit.

“You see, it’s all right, uncle, when I’m sure! Then we go strong, for all we’re worth. Don’t we, Bassett?”

“We do that, Master Paul.”

“And when are you sure?” said the uncle, laughing.

“Oh, well, sometimes I’m ABSOLUTELY sure, like about Daffodil,” said the boy; “and sometimes I have an idea; and sometimes I haven’t even an idea, have I, Bassett? Then we’re careful, because we mostly go down.”

“You do, do you! And when you’re sure, like about Daffodil, what makes you sure, sonny?”

“Oh, well, I don’t know,” said the boy uneasily. “I’m sure, you know, uncle; that’s all.”

“It’s as if he had it from heaven, sir,” Bassett reiterated.

“I should say so!” said the uncle.

But he became a partner. And when the Leger was coming on, Paul was “sure” about Lively Spark, which was a quite inconsiderable horse. The boy insisted on putting a thousand on the horse, Bassett went for five hundred, and Oscar Cresswell two hundred. Lively Spark came in first, and the betting had been ten to one against him. Paul had made ten thousand.

“You see,” he said, “I was absolutely sure of him.”

Even Oscar Cresswell had cleared two thousand.

“Look here, son,” he said, “this sort of thing makes me nervous.”

“It needn’t, uncle! Perhaps I shan’t be sure again for a long time.”

“But what are you going to do with your money?” asked the uncle.

“Of course,” said the boy, “I started it for mother. She said she had no luck, because father is unlucky, so I thought if I was lucky, it might stop whispering.”

“What might stop whispering?”

“Our house! I HATE our house for whispering.”

“What does it whisper?”

“Why — why”— the boy fidgeted —“why, I don’t know! But it’s always short of money, you know, uncle.”

“I know it, son, I know it.”

“You know people send mother writs, don’t you, uncle?”

“I’m afraid I do,” said the uncle.

“And then the house whispers like people laughing at you behind your back. It’s awful, that is! I thought if I was lucky —”

“You might stop it,” added the uncle.

The boy watched him with big blue eyes, that had an uncanny cold fire in them, and he said never a word.

“Well then!” said the uncle. “What are we doing?”

“I shouldn’t like mother to know I was lucky,” said the boy.

“Why not, son?”

“She’d stop me.”

“I don’t think she would.”

“Oh!”— and the boy writhed in an odd way —“I DON’T want her to know, uncle.”

“All right, son! We’ll manage it without her knowing.”

They managed it very easily. Paul, at the other’s suggestion, handed over five thousand pounds to his uncle, who deposited it with the family lawyer, who was then to inform Paul’s mother that a relative had put five thousand pounds into his hands, which sum was to be paid out a thousand pounds at a time, on the mother’s birthday, for the next five years.

“So she’ll have a birthday present of a thousand pounds for five successive years,” said Uncle Oscar. “I hope it won’t make it all the harder for her later.”

Paul’s mother had her birthday in November. The house had been “whispering” worse than ever lately, and even in spite of his luck, Paul could not bear up against it. He was very anxious to see the effect of the birthday letter, telling his mother about the thousand pounds.

When there were no visitors, Paul now took his meals with his parents, as he was beyond the nursery control. His mother went into town nearly every day. She had discovered that she had an odd knack of sketching furs and dress materials, so she worked secretly in the studio of a friend who was the chief “artist” for the leading drapers. She drew the figures of ladies in furs and ladies in silk and sequins for the newspaper advertisements. This young woman artist earned several thousand pounds a year, but Paul’s mother only made several hundreds, and she was again dissatisfied. She so wanted to be first in something, and she did not succeed, even in making sketches for drapery advertisements.

She was down to breakfast on the morning of her birthday. Paul watched her face as she read her letters. He knew the lawyer’s letter. As his mother read it, her face hardened and became more expressionless. Then a cold, determined look came on her mouth. She hid the letter under the pile of others, and said not a word about it.

“Didn’t you have anything nice in the post for your birthday, mother?” said Paul.

“Quite moderately nice,” she said, her voice cold and absent.

She went away to town without saying more.

But in the afternoon Uncle Oscar appeared. He said Paul’s mother had had a long interview with the lawyer, asking if the whole five thousand could not be advanced at once, as she was in debt.

“What do you think, uncle?” said the boy.

“I leave it to you, son.”

“Oh, let her have it, then! We can get some more with the other,” said the boy.

“A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, laddie!” said Uncle Oscar.

“But I’m sure to KNOW for the Grand National; or the Lincolnshire; or else the Derby. I’m sure to know for ONE of them,” said Paul.

So Uncle Oscar signed the agreement, and Paul’s mother touched the whole five thousand. Then something very curious happened. The voices in the house suddenly went mad, like a chorus of frogs on a spring evening. There were certain new furnishings, and Paul had a tutor. He was REALLY going to Eton, his father’s school, in the following autumn. There were flowers in the winter, and a blossoming of the luxury Paul’s mother had been used to. And yet the voices in the house, behind the sprays of mimosa and almond-blossom, and from under the piles of iridescent cushions, simply trilled and screamed in a sort of ecstasy: “There MUST be more money! Oh-h-h! There MUST be more money! Oh, now, now-w! now-w-w — there MUST be more money!— more than ever! More than ever!”

It frightened Paul terribly. He studied away at his Latin and Greek with his tutors. But his intense hours were spent with Bassett. The Grand National had gone by: he had not “known”, and had lost a hundred pounds. Summer was at hand. He was in agony for the Lincoln. But even for the Lincoln he didn’t “know”, and he lost fifty pounds. He became wild-eyed and strange, as if something were going to explode in him.

“Let it alone, son! Don’t you bother about it!” urged Uncle Oscar. But it was as if the boy couldn’t really hear what his uncle was saying.

“I’ve got to know for the Derby! I’ve GOT to know for the Derby!” the child reiterated, his big blue eyes blazing with a sort of madness.

His mother noticed how overwrought he was.

“You’d better go to the seaside. Wouldn’t you like to go now to the seaside, instead of waiting? I think you’d better,” she said, looking down at him anxiously, her heart curiously heavy because of him.

But the child lifted his uncanny blue eyes.

“I couldn’t possibly go before the Derby, mother!” he said. “I couldn’t possibly!”

“Why not?” she said, her voice becoming heavy when she was opposed. “Why not? You can still go from the seaside to see the Derby with your Uncle Oscar, if that’s what you wish. No need for you to wait here. Besides, I think you care too much about these races. It’s a bad sign. My family has been a gambling family, and you won’t know till you grow up how much damage it has done. But it has done damage. I shall have to send Bassett away, and ask Uncle Oscar not to talk racing to you, unless you promise to be reasonable about it: go away to the seaside and forget it. You’re all nerves!”

“I’ll do what you like, mother, so long as you don’t send me away till after the Derby,” the boy said.

“Send you away from where? Just from this house?”

“Yes,” he said, gazing at her.

“Why, you curious child, what makes you care about this house so much, suddenly? I never knew you loved it!”

He gazed at her without speaking. He had a secret within a secret, something he had not divulged, even to Bassett or to his Uncle Oscar.

But his mother, after standing undecided and a little bit sullen for some moments, said:

“Very well, then! Don’t go to the seaside till after the Derby, if you don’t wish it. But promise me you won’t let your nerves go to pieces! Promise you won’t think so much about horse-racing and EVENTS, as you call them!”

“Oh no!” said the boy, casually. “I won’t think much about them, mother. You needn’t worry. I wouldn’t worry, mother, if I were you.”

“If you were me and I were you,” said his mother, “I wonder what we SHOULD do!”

“But you know you needn’t worry, mother, don’t you?” the boy repeated.

“I should be awfully glad to know it,” she said wearily.

“Oh, well, you CAN, you know. I mean you OUGHT to know you needn’t worry!” he insisted.

“Ought I? Then I’ll see about it,” she said.

Paul’s secret of secrets was his wooden horse, that which had no name. Since he was emancipated from a nurse and a nursery governess, he had had his rocking-horse removed to his own bedroom at the top of the house.

“Surely you’re too big for a rocking-horse!” his mother had remonstrated.

“Well, you see, mother, till I can have a REAL horse, I like to have SOME sort of animal about,” had been his quaint answer.

“Do you feel he keeps you company?” she laughed.

“Oh yes! He’s very good, he always keeps me company, when I’m there,” said Paul.

So the horse, rather shabby, stood in an arrested prance in the boy’s bedroom.

The Derby was drawing near, and the boy grew more and more tense. He hardly heard what was spoken to him, he was very frail, and his eyes were really uncanny. His mother had sudden strange seizures of uneasiness about him. Sometimes, for half an hour, she would feel a sudden anxiety about him that was almost anguish. She wanted to rush to him at once, and know he was safe.

Two nights before the Derby, she was at a big party in town, when one of her rushes of anxiety about her boy, her first-born, gripped her heart till she could hardly speak. She fought with the feeling, might and main, for she believed in common-sense. But it was too strong. She had to leave the dance and go downstairs to telephone to the country. The children’s nursery governess was terribly surprised and startled at being rung up in the night.

“Are the children all right, Miss Wilmot?”

“Oh yes, they are quite all right.”

“Master Paul? Is he all right?”

“He went to bed as right as a trivet. Shall I run up and look at him?”

“No!” said Paul’s mother reluctantly. “No! Don’t trouble. It’s all right. Don’t sit up. We shall be home fairly soon.” She did not want her son’s privacy intruded upon.

“Very good,” said the governess.

It was about one o’clock when Paul’s mother and father drove up to their house. All was still. Paul’s mother went to her room and slipped off her white fur cloak. She had told her maid not to wait up for her. She heard her husband downstairs, mixing a whisky-and-soda.

And then, because of the strange anxiety at her heart, she stole upstairs to her son’s room. Noiselessly she went along the upper corridor. Was there a faint noise? What was it?

She stood, with arrested muscles, outside his door, listening. There was a strange, heavy, and yet not loud noise. Her heart stood still. It was a soundless noise, yet rushing and powerful. Something huge, in violent, hushed motion. What was it? What in God’s Name was it? She ought to know. She felt that she KNEW the noise. She knew what it was.

Yet she could not place it. She couldn’t say what it was. And on and on it went, like a madness.

Softly, frozen with anxiety and fear, she turned the door-handle.

The room was dark. Yet in the space near the window, she heard and saw something plunging to and fro. She gazed in fear and amazement.

Then suddenly she switched on the light, and saw her son, in his green pyjamas, madly surging on his rocking-horse. The blaze of light suddenly lit him up, as he urged the wooden horse, and lit her up, as she stood, blonde, in her dress of pale green and crystal, in the doorway.

“Paul!” she cried. “Whatever are you doing?”

“It’s Malabar!” he screamed, in a powerful, strange voice. “It’s Malabar!”

His eyes blazed at her for one strange and senseless second, as he ceased urging his wooden horse. Then he fell with a crash to the ground, and she, all her tormented motherhood flooding upon her, rushed to gather him up.

But he was unconscious, and unconscious he remained, with some brain-fever. He talked and tossed, and his mother sat stonily by his side.

“Malabar! It’s Malabar! Bassett, Bassett, I KNOW: it’s Malabar!”

So the child cried, trying to get up and urge the rocking-horse that gave him his inspiration.

“What does he mean by Malabar?” asked the heart-frozen mother.

“I don’t know,” said the father, stonily.

“What does he mean by Malabar?” she asked her brother Oscar.

“It’s one of the horses running for the Derby,” was the answer.

And, in spite of himself, Oscar Cresswell spoke to Bassett, and himself put a thousand on Malabar: at fourteen to one.

The third day of the illness was critical: they were watching for a change. The boy, with his rather long, curly hair, was tossing ceaselessly on the pillow. He neither slept nor regained consciousness, and his eyes were like blue stones. His mother sat, feeling her heart had gone, turned actually into a stone.

In the evening, Oscar Cresswell did not come, but Bassett sent a message, saying could he come up for one moment, just one moment? Paul’s mother was very angry at the intrusion, but on second thoughts she agreed. The boy was the same. Perhaps Bassett might bring him to consciousness.

The gardener, a shortish fellow with a little brown moustache and sharp little brown eyes, tiptoed into the room, touched his imaginary cap to Paul’s mother, and stole to the bedside, staring with glittering, smallish eyes at the tossing, dying child.

“Master Paul!” he whispered. “Master Paul! Malabar came in first all right, a clean win. I did as you told me. You’ve made over seventy thousand pounds, you have; you’ve got over eighty thousand. Malabar came in all right, Master Paul.”

“Malabar! Malabar! Did I say Malabar, mother? Did I say Malabar? Do you think I’m lucky, mother? I knew Malabar, didn’t I? Over eighty thousand pounds! I call that lucky, don’t you, mother? Over eighty thousand pounds! I knew, didn’t I know I knew? Malabar came in all right. If I ride my horse till I’m sure, then I tell you, Basset, you can go as high as you like. Did you go for all you were worth, Bassett?”

“I went a thousand on it, Master Paul.”

“I never told you, mother, that if I can ride my horse, and GET THERE, then I’m absolutely sure — oh, absolutely! Mother, did I ever tell you? I AM lucky!”

“No, you never did,” said the mother.

But the boy died in the night.

And even as he lay dead, his mother heard her brother’s voice saying to her: “My God, Hester, you’re eighty-odd thousand to the good, and a poor devil of a son to the bad. But, poor devil, poor devil, he’s best gone out of a life where he rides his rocking-horse to find a winner.”

**Robert Frost. "The Road Not Taken"**

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,

And sorry I could not travel both

And be one traveler, long I stood

And looked down one as far as I could

To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,

And having perhaps the better claim

Because it was grassy and wanted wear,

Though as for that the passing there

Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay

In leaves no step had trodden black.

Oh, I marked the first for another day!

Yet knowing how way leads on to way

I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh

Somewhere ages and ages hence:

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,

I took the one less traveled by,

And that has made all the difference.

**“Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening”**

Whose woods these are I think I know.

His house is in the village though;

He will not see me stopping here

To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer

To stop without a farmhouse near

Between the woods and frozen lake

The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake

To ask if there is some mistake.

The only other sound’s the sweep

Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep.

But I have promises to keep,

And miles to go before I sleep,

And miles to go before I sleep.

**Virginia Woolf. “The Lady in the Looking–Glass”**

**A Reflection**

People should not leave looking-glasses hanging in their rooms any more than they should leave open cheque books or letters confessing some hideous crime. One could not help looking, that summer afternoon, in the long glass that hung outside in the hall. Chance had so arranged it. From the depths of the sofa in the drawing-room one could see reflected in the Italian glass not only the marble-topped table opposite, but a stretch of the garden beyond. One could see a long grass path leading between banks of tall flowers until, slicing off an angle, the gold rim cut it off.

The house was empty, and one felt, since one was the only person in the drawing-room, like one of those naturalists who, covered with grass and leaves, lie watching the shyest animals — badgers, otters, kingfishers moving about freely, themselves unseen. The room that afternoon was full of such shy creatures, lights and shadows, curtains blowing, petals falling — things that never happen, so it seems, if someone is looking. The quiet old country room with its rugs and stone chimney pieces, its sunken book-cases and red and gold lacquer cabinets, was full of such nocturnal creatures. They came pirouetting across the floor, stepping delicately with high-lifted feet and spread tails and pecking allusive beaks as if they had been cranes or flocks of elegant flamingoes whose pink was faded, or peacocks whose trains were veiled with silver. And there were obscure flushes and darkenings too, as if a cuttlefish had suddenly suffused the air with purple; and the room had its passions and rages and envies and sorrows coming over it and clouding it, like a human being. Nothing stayed the same for two seconds together.

But, outside, the looking-glass reflected the hall table, the sunflowers, the garden path so accurately and so fixedly that they seemed held there in their reality unescapably. It was a strange contrast — all changing here, all stillness there. One could not help looking from one to the other. Meanwhile, since all the doors and windows were open in the heat, there was a perpetual sighing and ceasing sound, the voice of the transient and the perishing, it seemed, coming and going like human breath, while in the looking-glass things had ceased to breathe and lay still in the trance of immortality.

Half an hour ago the mistress of the house, Isabella Tyson, had gone down the grass path in her thin summer dress, carrying a basket, and had vanished, sliced off by the gilt rim of the looking-glass. She had gone presumably into the lower garden to pick flowers; or as it seemed more natural to suppose, to pick something light and fantastic and leafy and trailing, travellers’ joy, or one of those elegant sprays of convolvulus that twine round ugly walls and burst here and there into white and violet blossoms. She suggested the fantastic and the tremulous convolvulus rather than the upright aster, the starched zinnia, or her own burning roses alight like lamps on the straight posts of their rose trees. The comparison showed how very little, after all these years, one knew about her; for it is impossible that any woman of flesh and blood of fifty-five or sixty should be really a wreath or a tendril. Such comparisons are worse than idle and superficial — they are cruel even, for they come like the convolvulus itself trembling between one’s eyes and the truth. There must be truth; there must be a wall. Yet it was strange that after knowing her all these years one could not say what the truth about Isabella was; one still made up phrases like this about convolvulus and travellers’ joy. As for facts, it was a fact that she was a spinster; that she was rich; that she had bought this house and collected with her own hands — often in the most obscure corners of the world and at great risk from poisonous stings and Oriental diseases — the rugs, the chairs, the cabinets which now lived their nocturnal life before one’s eyes. Sometimes it seemed as if they knew more about her than we, who sat on them, wrote at them, and trod on them so care fully, were allowed to know. In each of these cabinets were many little drawers, and each almost certainly held letters, tied with bows of ribbon, sprinkled with sticks of lavender or rose leaves. For it was another fact — if facts were what one wanted — that Isabella had known many people, had had many friends; and thus if one had the audacity to open a drawer and read her letters, one would find the traces of many agitations, of appointments to meet, of upbraidings for not having met, long letters of intimacy and affection, violent letters of jealousy and reproach, terrible final words of parting — for all those interviews and assignations had led to nothing — that is, she had never married, and yet, judg ing from the mask-like indifference of her face, she had gone through twenty times more of passion and exper ience than those whose loves are trumpeted forth for all the world to hear. Under the stress of thinking about Isabella, her room became more shadowy and symbolic; the corners seemed darker, the legs of chairs and tables more spindly and hieroglyphic.

Suddenly these reflections were ended violently — and yet without a sound. A large black form loomed into the looking-glass; blotted out everything, strewed the table with a packet of marble tablets veined with pink and grey, and was gone. But the picture was entirely altered. For the moment it was unrecognizable and irrational and entirely out of focus. One could not relate these tablets to any human purpose. And then by degrees some logical process set to work on them and began ordering and arranging them and bringing them into the fold of common experience. One realized at last that they were merely letters. The man had brought the post.

There they lay on the marble-topped table, all dripping with light and colour at first and crude and unabsorbed. And then it was strange to see how they were drawn in and arranged and composed and made part of the picture and granted that stillness and immortality which the looking-glass conferred. They lay there invested with a new reality and significance and with a greater heaviness, too, as if it would have needed a chisel to dislodge them from the table. And, whether it was fancy or not, they seemed to have become not merely a handful of casual letters but to be tablets graven with eternal truth — if one could read them, one would know everything there was to be known about Isabella, yes, and about life, too. The pages inside those marble-looking envelopes must be cut deep and scored thick with meaning. Isabella would come in, and take them, one by one, very slowly, and open them, and read them carefully word by word, and then with a profound sigh of comprehension, as if she had seen to the bottom of everything, she would tear the envelopes to little bits and tie the letters together and lock the cabinet drawer in her determination to conceal what she did not wish to be known.

The thought served as a challenge. Isabella did not wish to be known — but she should no longer escape. It was absurd, it was monstrous. If she concealed so much and knew so much one must prise her open with the first tool that came to hand — the imagination. One must fix one’s mind upon her at that very moment. One must fasten her down there. One must refuse to be put off any longer with sayings and doings such as the moment brought forth — with dinners and visits and polite conversations. One must put oneself in her shoes. If one took the phrase literally, it was easy to see the shoes in which she stood, down in the lower garden, at this moment. They were very narrow and long and fashionable — they were made of the softest and most flexible leather. Like everything she wore, they were exquisite. And she would be standing under the high hedge in the lower part of the garden, raising the scissors that were tied to her waist to cut some dead flower, some overgrown branch. The sun would beat down on her face, into her eyes; but no, at the critical moment a veil of cloud covered the sun, making the expression of her eyes doubtful — was it mocking or tender, brilliant or dull? One could only see the indeterminate outline of her rather faded, fine face looking at the sky. She was thinking, perhaps, that she must order a new net for the strawberries; that she must send flowers to Johnson’s widow; that it was time she drove over to see the Hippesleys in their new house. Those were the things she talked about at dinner certainly. But one was tired of the things that she talked about at dinner. It was her profounder state of being that one wanted to catch and turn to words, the state that is to the mind what breathing is to the body, what one calls happiness or unhappiness. At the mention of those words it became obvious, surely, that she must be happy. She was rich; she was distinguished; she had many friends; she travelled — she bought rugs in Turkey and blue pots in Persia. Avenues of pleasure radiated this way and that from where she stood with her scissors raised to cut the trembling branches while the lacy clouds veiled her face.

Here with a quick movement of her scissors she snipped the spray of travellers’ joy and it fell to the ground. As it fell, surely some light came in too, surely one could penetrate a little farther into her being. Her mind then was filled with tenderness and regret. . . . To cut an overgrown branch saddened her because it had once lived, and life was dear to her. Yes, and at the same time the fall of the branch would suggest to her how she must die herself and all the futility and evanescence of things. And then again quickly catching this thought up, with her instant good sense, she thought life had treated her well; even if fall she must, it was to lie on the earth and moulder sweetly into the roots of violets. So she stood thinking. Without making any thought precise — for she was one of those reticent people whose minds hold their thoughts enmeshed in clouds of silence — she was filled with thoughts. Her mind was like her room, in which lights advanced and retreated, came pirouetting and stepping delicately, spread their tails, pecked their way; and then her whole being was suffused, like the room again, with a cloud of some profound knowledge, some unspoken regret, and then she was full of locked drawers, stuffed with letters, like her cabinets. To talk of “prising her open” as if she were an oyster, to use any but the finest and subtlest and most pliable tools upon her was impious and absurd. One must imagine — here was she in the looking-glass. It made one start.

She was so far off at first that one could not see her clearly. She came lingering and pausing, here straightening a rose, there lifting a pink to smell it, but she never stopped; and all the time she became larger and larger in the looking-glass, more and more completely the person into whose mind one had been trying to penetrate. One verified her by degrees — fitted the qualities one had discovered into this visible body. There were her grey-green dress, and her long shoes, her basket, and something sparkling at her throat. She came so gradually that she did not seem to derange the pattern in the glass, but only to bring in some new element which gently moved and altered the other objects as if asking them, courteously, to make room for her. And the letters and the table and the grass walk and the sunflowers which had been waiting in the looking-glass separated and opened out so that she might be received among them. At last there she was, in the hall. She stopped dead. She stood by the table. She stood perfectly still. At once the lookingglass began to pour over her a light that seemed to fix her; that seemed like some acid to bite off the unessential and superficial and to leave only the truth. It was an enthralling spectacle. Everything dropped from her — clouds, dress, basket, diamond — all that one had called the creeper and convolvulus. Here was the hard wall beneath. Here was the woman herself. She stood naked in that pitiless light. And there was nothing. Isabella was perfectly empty. She had no thoughts. She had no friends. She cared for nobody. As for her letters, they were all bills. Look, as she stood there, old and angular, veined and lined, with her high nose and her wrinkled neck, she did not even trouble to open them.

People should not leave looking-glasses hanging in their rooms.

**Arthur Miller. Death of a Salesman**

**INTRODUCTION**

Arthur Miller has emerged as one of the most successful and enduring playwrights of the postwar era in America, no doubt because his focusing on middle-class anxieties brought on by a society that emphasizes the hollow values of material success has struck such a responsive chord. The recurring theme of anxiety and insecurity reflects much of Arthur Miller’s own past. Born the son of a well-to-do Jewish manufacturer in New York City in 1915, Miller had to experience the social disintegration of his family when his father’s business failed during the Great Depression of the 1930s. By taking on such odd jobs as waiter, truck driver, and factory worker, Miller was able to complete his studies at the University of Michigan in 1938. These formative years gave Miller the chance to come in close contact with those who suffered the most from the Depression and instilled in him a strong sense of personal achievement necessary to rise above the situation. He began writing plays in the 1930s, but it wasn’t until Death of a Salesman was performed in 1949 that Miller established himself as a major American dramatist.

Winning the Pulitzer Prize in 1949, Death of a Salesman has to this day remained a classic. The play’s intellectual appeal lies in Miller’s refusal to portray his characters as two-dimensional — his refusal to involve himself in a one-sided polemic attack on capitalism. Even critics cannot agree as to whether Death of a Salesman is to be categorized as social criticism, a tragedy, or simply a psychological study. Of necessity, each person will have to draw his or her own individual conclusions.

The fact that performances of Death of a Salesman have met with acclaim throughout the world testifies to its universality: the play’s conflicts and themes appear not to be uniquely American.

THE CHARACTERS

WILLY LOMAN

LINDA BIFF HAPPY BERNARD

THE WOMAN CHARLEY UNCLE BEN

HOWARD WAGNER

JENNY

STANLEY

MISS FORSYTHE

LETTA

The action takes place in Willy Loman’s house and yard and in various places he visits in the New York and Boston of today.

New York premiere February 10, 1949.

ACT ONE

*A melody is heard, played upon a flute. It is small and fine, telling of grass and trees and the horizon. The curtain rises. Before us is the Salesman’s house. We are aware of towering, angular shapes behind it, surrounding it on all sides. Only the blue light of the sky falls upon the house and forestage; the surrounding area shows an angry glow of orange. As more light appears, we see a solid vault of apartment houses around the small, fragile-seeming home. An air of the dream dings to the place, a dream rising out of reality. The kitchen at center seems actual enough, for there is a kitchen table with three chairs, and a refrigerator. But no other fixtures are seen. At the back of the kitchen there is a draped entrance, which leads to the living room. To the right of the kitchen, on a level raised two feet, is a bedroom furnished only with a brass bedstead and a straight chair. On a shelf over the bed a silver athletic trophy stands. A window opens onto the apartment house at the side. Behind the kitchen, on a level raised six and a half feet, is the boys’ bedroom, at present barely visible. Two beds are dimly seen, and at the back of the room a dormer window. (This bedroom is above the unseen living room.) At the left a stairway curves up to it from the kitchen. The entire setting is wholly or, in some places, partially transparent. The roof-line of the house is one-dimensional; under and over it we see the apartment buildings. Before the house lies an apron, curving beyond the forestage into the orchestra. This forward area serves as the back yard as well as the locale of all Willy’s imaginings and of his city scenes. Whenever the action is in the present the actors observe the imaginary wall-lines, entering the house only through its door at the left. But in the scenes of the past these boundaries are broken, and characters enter or leave a room by stepping »through« a wall onto the forestage. From the right, Willy Loman, the Salesman, enters, carrying two large sample cases. The flute plays on. He hears but is not aware of it. He is past sixty years of age, dressed quietly. Even as he crosses the stage to the doorway of the house, his exhaustion is apparent. He unlocks the door, comes into the kitchen, and thankfully lets his burden down, feeling the soreness of his palms. A word-sigh escapes his lips — it might be »Oh, boy, oh, boy.« He closes the door, then carries his cases out into the living room, through the draped kitchen doorway. Linda, his wife, has stirred in her bed at the right. She gets out and puts on a robe, listening. Most often jovial, she has developed an iron repression of her exceptions to Willy’s behavior — she more than loves him, she admires him, as though his mercurial nature, his temper, his massive dreams and little cruelties, served her only as sharp reminders of the turbulent longings within him, longings which she shares but lacks the temperament to utter and follow to their end.*

LINDA (*hearing Willy outside the bedroom, calls with some trepidation*): Willy!

WILLY: It’s all right. I came back.

LINDA: Why? What happened? (*Slight pause*.) Did something happen, Willy?

WILLY: No, nothing happened.

LINDA: You didn’t smash the car, did you?

WILLY (*with casual irritation*): I said nothing happened. Didn’t you hear me?

LINDA: Don’t you feel well?

WILLY: I’m tired to the death. (*The flute has faded away. He sits on the bed beside her, a little numb*.) I couldn’t make it. I just couldn’t make it, Linda.

LINDA (*very carefully, delicately*): Where were you all day? You look terrible.

WILLY: I got as far as a little above Yonkers. I stopped for a cup of coffee. Maybe it was the coffee.

LINDA: What?

WILLY (*after a pause*): I suddenly couldn’t drive any more. The car kept going off onto the shoulder, y’know?

LINDA (*helpfully*): Oh. Maybe it was the steering again. I don’t think Angelo knows the Studebaker.

WILLY: No, it’s me, it’s me. Suddenly I realize I’m goin’ sixty miles an hour and I don’t remember the last five minutes. I’m— I can’t seem to — keep my mind to it.

LINDA: Maybe it’s your glasses. You never went for your new glasses.

WILLY: No, I see everything. I came back ten miles an hour. It took me nearly four hours from Yonkers.

LINDA (*resigned*): Well, you’ll just have to take a rest, Willy, you can’t continue this way.

WILLY: I just got back from Florida.

LINDA: But you didn’t rest your mind. Your mind is overactive, and the mind is what counts, dear.

WILLY: I’ll start out in the morning. Maybe I’ll feel better in the morning. (*She is taking off his shoes*.) These goddam arch supports are killing me.

LINDA: Take an aspirin. Should I get you an aspirin? It’ll soothe you.

WILLY (*with wonder*): I was driving along, you understand? And I was fine. I was even observing the scenery. You can imagine, me looking at scenery, on the road every week of my life. But it’s so beautiful up there, Linda, the trees are so thick, and the sun is warm. I opened the windshield and just let the warm air bathe over me. And then all of a sudden I’m goin’ off the road! I’m tellin’ya, I absolutely forgot I was driving. If I’d’ve gone the other way over the white line I might’ve killed somebody. So I went on again — and five minutes later I’m dreamin’ again, and I nearly... (*He presses two fingers against his eyes*.) I have such thoughts, I have such strange thoughts.

LINDA: Willy, dear. Talk to them again. There’s no reason why you can’t work in New York.

WILLY: They don’t need me in New York. I’m the New England man. I’m vital in New England.

LINDA: But you’re sixty years old. They can’t expect you to keep travelling every week.

WILLY: I’ll have to send a wire to Portland. I’m supposed to see Brown and Morrison tomorrow morning at ten o’clock to show the line. Goddammit, I could sell them! (*He starts putting on his jacket*.)

LINDA (*taking the jacket from him*): Why don’t you go down to the place tomorrow and tell Howard you’ve simply got to work in New York? You’re too accommodating, dear.

WILLY: If old man Wagner was alive I’d a been in charge of New York now! That man was a prince, he was a masterful man. But that boy of his, that Howard, he don’t appreciate. When I went north the first time, the Wagner Company didn’t know where New England was!

LINDA: Why don’t you tell those things to Howard, dear?

WILLY (*encouraged*): I will, I definitely will. Is there any cheese?

LINDA: I’ll make you a sandwich.

WILLY: No, go to sleep. I’ll take some milk. I’ll be up right away. The boys in?

LINDA: They’re sleeping. Happy took Biff on a date tonight.

WILLY (*interested*): That so?

LINDA: It was so nice to see them shaving together, one behind the other, in the bathroom. And going out together. You notice? The whole house smells of shaving lotion.

WILLY: Figure it out. Work a lifetime to pay off a house. You finally own it, and there’s nobody to live in it.

LINDA: Well, dear, life is a casting off. It’s always that way.

WILLY: No, no, some people accomplish something. Did Biff say anything after I went this morning?

LINDA: You shouldn’t have criticised him, Willy, especially after he just got off the train. You mustn’t lose your temper with him.

WILLY: When the hell did I lose my temper? I simply asked him if he was making any money. Is that a criticism?

LINDA: But, dear, how could he make any money?

WILLY (*worried and angered*): There’s such an undercurrent in him. He became a moody man. Did he apologize when I left this morning?

LINDA: He was crestfallen, Willy. You know how he admires you. I think if he finds himself, then you’ll both be happier and not fight any more.

WILLY: How can he find himself on a farm? Is that a life? A farmhand? In the beginning, when he was young, I thought, well, a young man, it’s good for him to tramp around, take a lot of different jobs. But it’s more than ten years now and he has yet to make thirty-five dollars a week!

LINDA: He’s finding himself, Willy.

WILLY: Not finding yourself at the age of thirty-four is a disgrace!

LINDA: Shh!

WILLY: The trouble is he’s lazy, goddammit!

LINDA: Willy, please!

WILLY: Biff is a lazy bum!

LINDA: They’re sleeping. Get something to eat. Go on down.

WILLY: Why did he come home? I would like to know what brought him home.

LINDA: I don’t know. I think he’s still lost, Willy. I think he’s very lost.

WILLY: Biff Loman is lost. In the greatest country in the world a young man with such — personal attractiveness, gets lost. And such a hard worker. There’s one thing about Biff — he’s not lazy.

LINDA: Never.

WILLY (*with pity and resolve*): I’ll see him in the morning; I’ll have a nice talk with him. I’ll get him a job selling. He could be big in no time. My God! Remember how they used to follow him around in high school? When he smiled at one of them their faces lit up. When he walked down the street... (*He loses himself in reminiscences*.)

LINDA (*trying to bring him out of it*): Willy, dear, I got a new kind of American-type cheese today. It’s whipped.

WILLY: Why do you get American when I like Swiss?

LINDA: I just thought you’d like a change...

WILLY: I don’t want a change! I want Swiss cheese. Why am I always being contradicted?

LINDA (*with a covering laugh*): I thought it would be a surprise.

WILLY: Why don’t you open a window in here, for God’s sake?

LINDA (*with infinite patience*): They’re all open, dear.

WILLY: The way they boxed us in here. Bricks and windows, windows and bricks.

LINDA: We should’ve bought the land next door.

WILLY: The street is lined with cars. There’s not a breath of fresh air in the neighborhood. The grass don’t grow any more, you can’t raise a carrot in the back yard. They should’ve had a law against apartment houses. Remember those two beautiful elm trees out there? When I and Biff hung the swing between them?

LINDA: Yeah, like being a million miles from the city.

WILLY: They should’ve arrested the builder for cutting those down. They massacred the neighbourhood. (*Lost*.) More and more I think of those days, Linda. This time of year it was lilac and wisteria. And then the peonies would come out, and the daffodils. What fragrance in this room!

LINDA: Well, after all, people had to move somewhere.

WILLY: No, there’s more people now.

LINDA: I don’t think there’s more people. I think

WILLY: There’s more people! That’s what’s ruining this country! Population is getting out of control. The competition is maddening! Smell the stink from that apartment house! And another one on the other side... How can they whip cheese?

*(On Willy’s last line, Biff and Happy raise themselves up in their beds, listening.)*

LINDA: Go down, try it. And be quiet.

WILLY (*turning to Linda, guiltily*): You’re not worried about me, are you, sweetheart?

BIFF: What’s the matter?

HAPPY: Listen!

LINDA: You’ve got too much on the ball to worry about.

WILLY: You’re my foundation and my support, Linda.

LINDA: Just try to relax, dear. You make mountains out of molehills.

WILLY: I won’t fight with him any more. If he wants to go back to Texas, let him go.

LINDA: He’ll find his way.

WILLY: Sure. Certain men just don’t get started till later in life. Like Thomas Edison; I think. Or B. F. Goodrich. One of them was deaf. (*He starts for the bedroom doorway*.) I’ll put my money on Biff.

LINDA: And Willy — if it’s warm Sunday we’ll drive in the country. And we’ll open the windshield, and take lunch.

WILLY: No, the windshields don’t open on the new cars.

LINDA: But you opened it today.

WILLY: Me? I didn’t. (*He stops*.) Now isn’t that peculiar! Isn’t that a remarkable... (*He breaks off in amazement and fright as the flute is heard distantly.*)

LINDA: What, darling?

WILLY: That is the most remarkable thing.

LINDA: What, dear?

WILLY: I was thinking of the Chevvy. (*Slight pause*.) Nineteen twenty-eight ... when I had that red Chevvy... (*Breaks off*.) That funny? I coulda sworn I was driving that Chevvy today.

LINDA: Well, that’s nothing. Something must’ve reminded you.

WILLY: Remarkable. Ts. Remember those days? The way Biff used to simonize that car? The dealer refused to believe there was eighty thousand miles on it. (*He shakes his head*.) Heh! (*To Linda*.) Close your eyes, I’ll be right up. (*He walks out of the bedroom*.)

HAPPY (*to Biff*): Jesus, maybe he smashed up the car again!

LINDA (*calling after Willy*): Be careful on the stairs, dear! The cheese is on the middle shelf. (*She turns, goes over to the bed, takes his jacket, and goes out of the bedroom*.)

(*Light has risen on the boys’ room. Unseen, Willy is heard talking to himself, »eighty thousand miles,« and a little laugh. Biff gets out of bed, comes downstage a bit, and stands attentively. Biff is two years older than his brother Happy, well built, but in these days bears a worn air and seems less self-assured. He has succeeded less, and his dreams are stronger and less acceptable than Happy’s. Happy is tall, powerfully made. Sexuality is like a visible color on him, or a scent that many women have discovered. He, like his brother, is lost, but in a different way, for he has never allowed himself to turn his face toward defeat and is thus more confused and hard-skinned, although seemingly more content.)*

HAPPY (**getting out of bed**): He’s going to get his license taken away if he keeps that up. I’m getting nervous about him, y’know, Biff?

BIFF: His eyes are going.

HAPPY: I’ve driven with him. He sees all right. He just doesn’t keep his mind on it. I drove into the city with him last week.

*He stops at a green light and then it turns red and he goes. (He laughs.)*

BIFF: Maybe he’s color-blind.

HAPPY: Pop? Why he’s got the finest eye for color in the business. You know that.

BIFF (*sitting down on his bed*): I’m going to sleep.

HAPPY: You’re not still sour on Dad, are you, Biff?

BIFF: He’s all right, I guess.

WILLY (*underneath them, in the living room*): Yes, sir, eighty thousand miles — eighty-two thousand!

BIFF: You smoking?

HAPPY (*holding out a pack of cigarettes*): Want one?

BIFF: (*taking a cigarette*): I can never sleep when I smell it.

WILLY: What a simonizing job, heh?

HAPPY (*with deep sentiment*): Funny, Biff, y’know? Us sleeping in here again? The old beds. (*He pats his bed affectionately*.) All the talk that went across those two beds, huh? Our whole lives.

BIFF: Yeah. Lotta dreams and plans.

HAPPY (*with a deep and masculine laugh*): About five hundred women would like to know what was said in this room. (*They share a soft laugh*.)

BIFF: Remember that big Betsy something — what the hell was her name — over on Bushwick Avenue?

HAPPY (*combing his hair*): With the collie dog!

BIFF: That’s the one. I got you in there, remember?

HAPPY: Yeah, that was my first time — I think. Boy, there was a pig. (*They laugh, almost crudely*.) You taught me everything I know about women. Don’t forget that.

BIFF: I bet you forgot how bashful you used to be. Especially with girls.

HAPPY: Oh, I still am, Biff.

BIFF: Oh, go on.

HAPPY: I just control it, that’s all. I think I got less bashful and you got more so. What happened, Biff? Where’s the old humor, the old confidence? (*He shakes Biffs knee. Biff gets up and moves restlessly about the room.*) What’s the matter?

BIFF: Why does Dad mock me all the time?

HAPPY: He’s not mocking you, he...

BIFF: Everything I say there’s a twist of mockery on his face. I can’t get near him.

HAPPY: He just wants you to make good, that’s all. I wanted to talk to you about Dad for a long time, Biff. Something’s — happening to him. He — talks to himself.

BIFF: I noticed that this morning. But he always mumbled.

HAPPY: But not so noticeable. It got so embarrassing I sent him to Florida. And you know something? Most of the time he’s talking to you.

BIFF: What’s he say about me?

HAPPY: I can’t make it out.

BIFF: What’s he say about me?

HAPPY: I think the fact that you’re not settled, that you’re still kind of up in the air...

BIFF: There’s one or two other things depressing him, Happy.

HAPPY: What do you mean?

BIFF: Never mind. Just don’t lay it all to me.

HAPPY: But I think if you just got started — I mean — is there any future for you out there?

BIFF: I tell ya, Hap, I don’t know what the future is. I don’t know— what I’m supposed to want.

HAPPY: What do you mean?

BIFF: Well, I spent six or seven years after high school trying to work myself up. Shipping clerk, salesman, business of one kind or another. And it’s a measly manner of existence. To get on that subway on the hot mornings in summer. To devote your whole life to keeping stock, or making phone calls, or selling or buying. To suffer fifty weeks of the year for the sake of a two week vacation, when all you really desire is to be outdoors, with your shirt off. And always to have to get ahead of the next fella. And still — that’s how you build a future.

HAPPY: Well, you really enjoy it on a farm? Are you content out there?

BIFF (*with rising agitation*): Hap, I’ve had twenty or thirty different kinds of jobs since I left home before the war, and it always turns out the same. I just realized it lately. In Nebraska when I herded cattle, and the Dakotas, and Arizona, and now in Texas. It’s why I came home now, I guess, because I realized it. This farm I work on, it’s spring there now, see? And they’ve got about fifteen new colts. There’s nothing more inspiring or — beautiful than the sight of a mare and a new colt. And it’s cool there now, see? Texas is cool now, and it’s spring. And whenever spring comes to where I am, I suddenly get the feeling, my God, I’m not gettin’ anywhere! What the hell am I doing, playing around with horses, twenty-eight dollars a week! I’m thirty-four years old, I oughta be makin’ my future. That’s when I come running home. And now, I get here, and I don’t know what to do with myself. (*After a pause*.) I’ve always made a point of not wasting my life, and everytime I come back here I know that all I’ve done is to waste my life.

HAPPY: You’re a poet, you know that, Biff? You’re a — you’re an idealist!

BIFF: No, I’m mixed up very bad. Maybe I oughta get married. Maybe I oughta get stuck into something. Maybe that’s my trouble. I’m like a boy. I’m not married, I’m not in business, I just — I’m like a boy. Are you content, Hap? You’re a success, aren’t you? Are you content?

HAPPY: Hell, no!

BIFF: Why? You’re making money, aren’t you?

HAPPY (*moving about with energy, expressiveness*): All I can do now is wait for the merchandise manager to die. And suppose I get to be merchandise manager? He’s a good friend of mine, and he just built a terrific estate on Long Island. And he lived there about two months and sold it, and now he’s building another one. He can’t enjoy it once it’s finished. And I know that’s just what I would do. I don’t know what the hell I’m workin’ for. Sometimes I sit in my apartment — all alone. And I think of the rent I’m paying. And it’s crazy. But then, it’s what I always wanted. My own apartment, a car, and plenty of women. And still, goddammit, I’m lonely.

BIFF (*with enthusiasm*): Listen, why don’t you come out West with me?

HAPPY: You and I, heh?

BIFF: Sure, maybe we could buy a ranch. Raise cattle, use our muscles. Men built like we are should be working out in the open.

HAPPY (*avidly*): The Loman Brothers, heh?

BIFF (*with vast affection*): Sure, we’d be known all over the counties!

HAPPY (*enthralled*): That’s what I dream about, Biff. Sometimes I want to just rip my clothes off in the middle of the store and outbox that goddam merchandise manager. I mean I can outbox, outrun, and outlift anybody in that store, and I have to take orders from those common, petty sons-of-bitches till I can’t stand it any more.

BIFF: I’m tellin’ you, kid, if you were with me I’d be happy out there.

HAPPY (*enthused*): See, Biff, everybody around me is so false that

I’m constantly lowering my ideals...

BIFF: Baby, together we’d stand up for one another, we’d have someone to trust.

HAPPY: If I were around you...

BIFF: Hap, the trouble is we weren’t brought up to grub for money. I don’t know how to do it.

HAPPY: Neither can I!

BIFF: Then let’s go!

HAPPY: The only thing is — what can you make out there?

BIFF: But look at your friend. Builds an estate and then hasn’t the peace of mind to live in it.

HAPPY: Yeah, but when he walks into the store the waves part in front of him. That’s fifty-two thousand dollars a year coming through the revolving door, and I got more in my pinky finger than he’s got in his head.

BIFF: Yeah, but you just said...

HAPPY: I gotta show some of those pompous, self-important executives over there that Hap Loman can make the grade. I want to walk into the store the way he walks in. Then I’ll go with you, Biff. We’ll be together yet, I swear. But take those two we had tonight. Now weren’t they gorgeous creatures?

BIFF: Yeah, yeah, most gorgeous I’ve had in years.

HAPPY: I get that any time I want, Biff. Whenever I feel disgusted. The only trouble is, it gets like bowling or something. I just keep knockin’ them over and it doesn’t mean anything. You still run around a lot?

BIFF: Naa. I’d like to find a girl — steady, somebody with substance.

HAPPY: That’s what I long for.

BIFF: Go on! You’d never come home.

HAPPY: I would! Somebody with character, with resistance! Like Mom, y’know? You’re gonna call me a bastard when I tell you this. That girl Charlotte I was with tonight is engaged to be married in five weeks. (*He tries on his new hat*.)

BIFF: No kiddin’!

HAPPY: Sure, the guy’s in line for the vice-presidency of the store. I don’t know what gets into me, maybe I just have an overdeveloped sense of competition or something, but I went and ruined her, and furthermore I can’t get rid of her. And he’s the third executive I’ve done that to. Isn’t that a crummy characteristic? And to top it all, I go to their weddings! (*Indignantly, but laughing*.) Like I’m not supposed to take bribes. Manufacturers offer me a hundred-dollar bill now and then to throw an order their way. You know how honest I am, but it’s like this girl, see. I hate myself for it. Because I don’t want the girl, and still, I take it and — I love it!

BIFF: Let’s go to sleep.

HAPPY: I guess we didn’t settle anything, heh?

BIFF: I just got one idea that I think I’m going to try.

HAPPY: What’s that?

BIFF: Remember Bill Oliver?

HAPPY: Sure, Oliver is very big now. You want to work for him again?

BIFF: No, but when I quit he said something to me. He put his arm on my shoulder, and he said, »Biff, if you ever need anything, come to me.«

HAPPY: I remember that. That sounds good.

BIFF: I think I’ll go to see him. If I could get ten thousand or even seven or eight thousand dollars I could buy a beautiful ranch.

HAPPY: I bet he’d back you. Cause he thought highly of you, Biff.

I mean, they all do. You’re well liked, Biff. That’s why I say to come back here, and we both have the apartment. And I’m tellin’ you, Biff, any babe you want...

BIFF: No, with a ranch I could do the work I like and still be something. I just wonder though. I wonder if Oliver still thinks I stole that carton of basketballs.

HAPPY: Oh, he probably forgot that long ago. It’s almost ten years. You’re too sensitive. Anyway, he didn’t really fire you.

BIFF: Well, I think he was going to. I think that’s why I quit. I was never sure whether he knew or not. I know he thought the world of me, though. I was the only one he’d let lock up the place.

WILLY (*below*): You gonna wash the engine, Biff?

HAPPY: Shh!

*(Biff looks at Happy, who is gazing down, listening. Willy is mumbling in the parlor.)*

HAPPY: You hear that? (*They listen. Willy laughs warmly*.)

BIFF (*growing angry*): Doesn’t he know Mom can hear that?

WILLY: Don’t get your sweater dirty, Biff! (*A look of pain crosses Biffs face*.)

HAPPY: Isn’t that terrible? Don’t leave again, will you? You’ll find a job here. You gotta stick around. I don’t know what to do about him, it’s getting embarrassing.

WILLY: What a simonizing job!

BIFF: Mom’s hearing that!

WILLY: No kiddin’, Biff, you got a date? Wonderful!

HAPPY: Go on to sleep. But talk to him in the morning, will you?

BIFF (*reluctantly getting into bed*): With her in the house. Brother!

HAPPY (*getting into bed*): I wish you’d have a good talk with him.

*(The light of their room begins to fade.)*

BIFF (*to himself in bed*): That selfish, stupid...

HAPPY: Sh... Sleep, Biff.

*(Their light is out. Well before they have finished speaking, Willy’s form is dimly seen below in the darkened kitchen. He opens the refrigerator, searches in there, and takes out a bottle of milk. The apartment houses are fading out, and the entire house and surroundings become covered with leaves. Music insinuates itself as the leaves appear.)*

WILLY: Just wanna be careful with those girls, Biff, that’s all.

Don’t make any promises. No promises of any kind. Because a girl, y’know, they always believe what you tell ‘em, and you’re very young, Biff, you’re too young to be talking seriously to girls.

*(Light rises on the kitchen. Willy, talking, shuts the refrigerator door and comes downstage to the kitchen table. He pours milk into a glass. He is totally immersed in himself, smiling faintly.)*

WILLY: Too young entirely, Biff. You want to watch your schooling first. Then when you’re all set, there’ll be plenty of girls for a boy like you. (*He smiles broadly at a kitchen chair*.) That so? The girls pay for you? (*He laughs*) Boy, you must really be makin’ a hit.

*(Willy is gradually addressing — physically — a point offstage, speaking through the wall of the kitchen, and his voice has been rising in volume to that of a normal conversation.)*

WILLY: I been wondering why you polish the car so careful. Ha! Don’t leave the hubcaps, boys. Get the chamois to the hubcaps. Happy, use newspaper on the windows, it’s the easiest thing. Show him how to do it Biff! You see, Happy? Pad it up, use it like a pad. That’s it, that’s it, good work. You’re doin’ all right, Hap. (*He pauses, then nods in approbation for a few seconds, then looks upward.*) Biff, first thing we gotta do when we get time is clip that big branch over the house. Afraid it’s gonna fall in a storm and hit the roof. Tell you what. We get a rope and sling her around, and then we climb up there with a couple of saws and take her down. Soon as you finish the car, boys, I wanna see ya. I got a surprise for you, boys.

BIFF (*offstage*): Whatta ya got, Dad?

WILLY: No, you finish first. Never leave a job till you’re finished

— remember that. (*Looking toward the »big trees«.)* Biff, up in Albany I saw a beautiful hammock. I think I’ll buy it next trip, and we’ll hang it right between those two elms. Wouldn’t that be something? Just swingin’ there under those branches. Boy, that would be...

*(Young Biff and Young Happy appear from the direction Willy was addressing. Happy carries rags and a pail of water. Biff, wearing a sweater with a block »S«, carries a football.)*

BIFF (*pointing in the direction of the car offstage*): How’s that, Pop, professional?

WILLY: Terrific. Terrific job, boys. Good work, Biff.

HAPPY: Where’s the surprise, Pop?

WILLY: In the back seat of the car.

HAPPY: Boy! (*He runs off*.)

BIFF: What is it, Dad? Tell me, what’d you buy?

WILLY (*laughing, cuffs him*): Never mind, something I want you to have.

BIFF (*turns and starts off*): What is it, Hap?

HAPPY (*offstage*): It’s a punching bag!

BIFF: Oh, Pop!

WILLY: It’s got Gene Tunney’s signature on it! (*Happy runs onstage with a punching bag*.)

BIFF: Gee, how’d you know we wanted a punching bag?

WILLY: Well, it’s the finest thing for the timing.

HAPPY (*lies down on his back and pedals with his feet*): I’m losing weight, you notice, Pop?

WILLY (*to Happy*): Jumping rope is good too.

BIFF: Did you see the new football I got?

WILLY (*examining the ball*): Where’d you get a new ball?

BIFF: The coach told me to practice my passing.

WILLY: That so? And he gave you the ball, heh?

BIFF: Well, I borrowed it from the locker room. (*He laughs confidentially*.)

WILLY (*laughing with him at the theft*): I want you to return that.

HAPPY: I told you he wouldn’t like it!

BIFF (*angrily*): Well, I’m bringing it back!

WILLY (*stopping the incipient argument, to Happy*): Sure, he’s gotta practice with a regulation ball, doesn’t he? (*To Biff*.) Coach’ll probably congratulate you on your initiative!

BIFF: Oh, he keeps congratulating my initiative all the time, Pop.

WILLY: That’s because he likes you. If somebody else took that ball there’d be an uproar. So what’s the report, boys, what’s the report?

BIFF: Where’d you go this time, Dad? Gee we were lonesome for you.

WILLY (*pleased, puts an arm around each boy and they come down to the apron*): Lonesome, heh?

BIFF: Missed you every minute.

WILLY: Don’t say? Tell you a secret, boys. Don’t breathe it to a soul. Someday I’ll have my own business, and I’ll never have to leave home any more.

HAPPY: Like Uncle Charley, heh?

WILLY: Bigger than Uncle Charley! Because Charley is not —liked. He’s liked, but he’s not — well liked.

BIFF: Where’d you go this time, Dad?

WILLY: Well, I got on the road, and I went north to Providence. Met the Mayor.

BIFF: The Mayor of Providence!

WILLY: He was sitting in the hotel lobby.

BIFF: What’d he say?

WILLY: He said, »Morning!« And I said, »You got a fine city here, Mayor.« And then he had coffee with me. And then I went to Waterbury. Waterbury is a fine city. Big clock city, the famous Waterbury clock. Sold a nice bill there. And then Boston — Boston is the cradle of the Revolution. A fine city. And a couple of other towns in Mass., and on to Portland and Bangor and straight home!

BIFF: Gee, I’d love to go with you sometime, Dad.

WILLY: Soon as summer comes.

HAPPY: Promise?

WILLY: You and Hap and I, and I’ll show you all the towns.

America is full of beautiful towns and fine, upstanding people. And they know me, boys, they know me up and down New England. The finest people. And when I bring you fellas up, there’ll be open sesame for all of us, ‘cause one thing, boys: I have friends. I can park my car in any street in New England, and the cops protect it like their own. This summer, heh?

BIFF AND HAPPY (*together*): Yeah! You bet!

WILLY: We’ll take our bathing suits.

HAPPY: We’ll carry your bags, Pop!

WILLY: Oh, won’t that be something! Me comin’ into the Boston stores with you boys carryin’ my bags. What a sensation!

*(Biff is prancing around, practicing passing the ball.)*

WILLY: You nervous, Biff, about the game?

BIFF: Not if you’re gonna be there.

WILLY: What do they say about you in school, now that they made you captain?

HAPPY: There’s a crowd of girls behind him everytime the classes change.

BIFF (*taking Willy’s hand*): This Saturday, Pop, this Saturday —just for you, I’m going to break through for a touchdown.

HAPPY: You’re supposed to pass.

BIFF: I’m takin’ one play for Pop. You watch me, Pop, and when I take off my helmet, that means I’m breakin’ out. Then you watch me crash through that line!

WILLY *(kisses Biff*): Oh, wait’ll I tell this in Boston!

*(Bernard enters in knickers. He is younger than Biff, earnest and loyal, a worried boy).*

BERNARD: Biff, where are you? You’re supposed to study with me today.

WILLY: Hey, looka Bernard. What’re you lookin’ so anemic about, Bernard?

BERNARD: He’s gotta study, Uncle Willy. He’s got Regents next week.

HAPPY (*tauntingly, spinning Bernard around*): Let’s box, Bernard!

BERNARD: Biff! (*He gets away from Happy*.) Listen, Biff, I heard Mr. Birnbaum say that if you don’t start studyin’ math he’s gonna flunk you, and you won’t graduate. I heard him!

WILLY: You better study with him, Biff. Go ahead now.

BERNARD: I heard him!

BIFF: Oh, Pop, you didn’t see my sneakers! (*He holds up a foot for Willy to look at.*)

WILLY: Hey, that’s a beautiful job of printing!

BERNARD (*wiping his glasses*): Just because he printed University of Virginia on his sneakers doesn’t mean they’ve got to graduate him. Uncle Willy!

WILLY (*angrily*): What’re you talking about? With scholarships to three universities they’re gonna flunk him?

BERNARD: But I heard Mr. Birnbaum say...

WILLY: Don’t be a pest, Bernard! (*To his boys*.) What an anemic!

BERNARD: Okay, I’m waiting for you in my house, Biff.

*(Bernard goes off. The Lomans laugh.)*

WILLY: Bernard is not well liked, is he?

BIFF: He’s liked, but he’s not well liked.

HAPPY: That’s right, Pop.

WILLY: That’s just what I mean. Bernard can get the best marks in school, y’understand, but when he gets out in the business world, y’understand, you are going to be five times ahead of him. That’s why I thank Almighty God you’re both built like Adonises. Because the man who makes an appearance in the business world, the man who creates personal interest, is the man who gets ahead. Be liked and you will never want. You take me, for instance. I never have to wait in line to see a buyer. »Willy Loman is here!« That’s all they have to know, and I go right through.

BIFF: Did you knock them dead. Pop?

WILLY: Knocked ‘em cold in Providence, slaughtered ‘em in Boston.

HAPPY (*on his back, pedaling again*): I’m losing weight, you notice, Pop?

*(Linda enters as of old, a ribbon in her hair, carrying a basket of washing.)*

LINDA (*with youthful energy*): Hello, dear!

WILLY: Sweetheart!

LINDA: How’d the Chevvy run?

WILLY: Chevrolet, Linda, is the greatest car ever built. (*To the boys*.) Since when do you let your mother carry wash up the stairs?

BIFF: Grab hold there, boy!

HAPPY: Where to, Mom?

LINDA: Hang them up on the line. And you better go down to your friends, Biff. The cellar is full of boys. They don’t know what to do with themselves.

BIFF: Ah, when Pop comes home they can wait!

WILLY (*laughs appreciatively*): You better go down and tell them what to do, Biff.

BIFF: I think I’ll have them sweep out the furnace room.

WILLY: Good work, Biff.

BIFF (*goes through wall-line of kitchen to doorway at back and calls down*): Fellas! Everybody sweep out the furnace room! I’ll be right down!

VOICES: All right! Okay, Biff.

BIFF: George and Sam and Frank, come out back! We’re hangin’ up the wash! Come on, Hap, on the double! (*He and Happy carry out the basket*.)

LINDA: The way they obey him!

WILLY: Well, that’s training, the training. I’m tellin’ you, I was sellin’ thousands and thousands, but I had to come home.

LINDA: Oh, the whole block’ll be at that game. Did you sell anything?

WILLY: I did five hundred gross in Providence and seven hundred gross in Boston.

LINDA: No! Wait a minute, I’ve got a pencil. (*She pulls pencil and paper out of her apron pocket*.) That makes your commission...

Two hundred... my God! Two hundred and twelve dollars!

WILLY: Well, I didn’t figure it yet, but...

LINDA: How much did you do?

WILLY: Well, I — I did — about a hundred and eighty gross in Providence. Well, no — it came to — roughly two hundred gross on the whole trip.

LINDA (*without hesitation*): Two hundred gross. That’s... (*She figures*.)

WILLY: The trouble was that three of the stores were half-closed for inventory in Boston. Otherwise I woulda broke records.

LINDA: Well, it makes seventy dollars and some pennies. That’s very good.

WILLY: What do we owe?

LINDA: Well, on the first there’s sixteen dollars on the refrigerator

WILLY: Why sixteen?

LINDA: Well, the fan belt broke, so it was a dollar eighty.

WILLY: But it’s brand new.

LINDA: Well, the man said that’s the way it is. Till they work themselves in, y’know.

*(They move through the wall-line into the kitchen.)*

WILLY: I hope we didn’t get stuck on that machine.

LINDA: They got the biggest ads of any of them!

WILLY: I know, it’s a fine machine. What else?

LINDA: Well, there’s nine-sixty for the washing machine. And for the vacuum cleaner there’s three and a half due on the fifteenth. Then the roof, you got twenty-one dollars remaining.

WILLY: It don’t leak, does it?

LINDA: No, they did a wonderful job. Then you owe Frank for the carburetor.

WILLY: I’m not going to pay that man! That goddam Chevrolet, they ought to prohibit the manufacture oft hat car!

LINDA: Well, you owe him three and a half. And odds and ends, comes to around a hundred and twenty dollars by the fifteenth.

WILLY: A hundred and twenty dollars! My God, if business don’t pick up I don’t know what I’m gonna do!

LINDA: Well, next week you’ll do better.

WILLY: Oh, I’ll knock ‘em dead next week. I’ll go to Hartford. I’m very well liked in Hartford. You know, the trouble is, Linda, people don’t seem to take to me.

*(They move onto the forestage.)*

LINDA: Oh, don’t be foolish.

WILLY: I know it when I walk in. They seem to laugh at me.

LINDA: Why? Why would they laugh at you? Don’t talk that way, Willy.

(*Willy moves to the edge of the stage. Linda goes into the kitchen and starts to dam stockings*.)

WILLY: I don’t know the reason for it, but they just pass me by. I’m not noticed.

LINDA: But you’re doing wonderful, dear. You’re making seventy to a hundred dollars a week.

WILLY: But I gotta be at it ten, twelve hours a day. Other men — I don’t know — they do it easier. I don’t know why — I can’t stop myself — I talk too much. A man oughta come in with a few words. One thing about Charley. He’s a man of few words, and they respect him.

LINDA: You don’t talk too much, you’re just lively.

WILLY (*smiling*): Well, I figure, what the hell, life is short, a couple of jokes. (*To himself*.) I joke too much (*The smile goes*.)

LINDA: Why? You’re...

WILLY: I’m fat. I’m very — foolish to look at, Linda. I didn’t tell you, but Christmas time I happened to be calling on F. H. Stewarts, and a salesman I know, as I was going in to see the buyer I heard him say something about — walrus. And I — I cracked him right across the face. I won’t take that. I simply will not take that. But they do laugh at me. I know that.

LINDA: Darling...

WILLY: I gotta overcome it. I know I gotta overcome it. I’m not dressing to advantage, maybe.

LINDA: Willy, darling, you’re the handsomest man in the world...

WILLY: Oh, no, Linda.

LINDA: To me you are. (*Slight pause*.) The handsomest.

(*From the darkness is heard the laughter of a woman. Willy doesn’t turn to it, but it continues through Linda’s lines*.)

LINDA: And the boys, Willy. Few men are idolized by their children the way you are.

(*Music is heard as behind a scrim, to the left of the house; The*

*Woman, dimly seen, is dressing.)*

WILLY (*with great feeling*): You’re the best there is, Linda, you’re a pal, you know that? On the road — on the road I want to grab you sometimes and just kiss the life outa you.

*(The laughter is loud now, and he moves into a brightening area at the left, where The Woman has come from behind the scrim and is standing, putting on her hat, looking into a »mirror« and laughing.)*

WILLY: Cause I get so lonely — especially when business is bad and there’s nobody to talk to. I get the feeling that I’ll never sell anything again, that I won’t make a living for you, or a business, a business for the boys. (*He talks through The Woman’s subsiding laughter; The Woman primps at the »mirror«*.) There’s so much I want to make for...

THE WOMAN: Me? You didn’t make me, Willy. I picked you.

WILLY (*pleased*): You picked me?

THE WOMAN: (*who is quite proper-looking, Willy’s age*): I did. I’ve been sitting at that desk watching all the salesmen go by, day in, day out. But you’ve got such a sense of humor, and we do have such a good time together, don’t we?

WILLY: Sure, sure. (*He takes her in his arms*.) Why do you have to go now?

THE WOMAN: It’s two o’clock...

WILLY: No, come on in! (*He pulls her*.)

THE WOMAN:... my sisters’ll be scandalized. When’ll you be back?

WILLY: Oh, two weeks about. Will you come up again?

THE WOMAN: Sure thing. You do make me laugh. It’s good for me. (*She squeezes his arm, kisses him*.) And I think you’re a wonderful man.

WILLY: You picked me, heh?

THE WOMAN: Sure. Because you’re so sweet. And such a kidder.

WILLY: Well, I’ll see you next time I’m in Boston.

THE WOMAN: I’ll put you right through to the buyers.

WILLY (*slapping her bottom*): Right. Well, bottoms up!

THE WOMAN (*slaps him gently and laughs*): You just kill me, Willy. (*He suddenly grabs her and kisses her roughly.*) You kill me. And thanks for the stockings. I love a lot of stockings. Well, good night.

WILLY: Good night. And keep your pores open!

THE WOMAN: Oh, Willy!

(*The Woman bursts out laughing, and Linda’s laughter blends in. The Woman disappears into the dark. Now the area at the kitchen table brightens. Linda is sitting where she was at the kitchen table, but now is mending a pair of her silk stockings.)*

LINDA: You are, Willy. The handsomest man. You’ve got no reason to feel that...

WILLY (*corning out of The Woman’s dimming area and going over to Linda*): I’ll make it all up to you, Linda, I’ll...

LINDA: There’s nothing to make up, dear. You’re doing fine, better than...

WILLY (*noticing her mending*): What’s that?

LINDA: Just mending my stockings. They’re so expensive...

WILLY (*angrily, taking them from her*): I won’t have you mending stockings in this house! Now throw them out! (*Linda puts the stockings in her pocket*.)

BERNARD (*entering on the run*): Where is he? If he doesn’t study!

WILLY (*moving to the forestage, with great agitation*): You’ll give him the answers!

BERNARD: I do, but I can’t on a Regents! That’s a state exam!

They’re liable to arrest me!

WILLY: Where is he? I’ll whip him, I’ll whip him!

LINDA: And he’d better give back that football, Willy, it’s not nice.

WILLY: Biff! Where is he? Why is he taking everything?

LINDA: He’s too rough with the girls, Willy. All the mothers are afraid of him!

WILLY: I’ll whip him!

BERNARD: He’s driving the car without a license!

(*The Woman’s laugh is heard*.)

WILLY: Shut up!

LINDA: All the mothers...

WILLY: Shut up!

BERNARD (*backing quietly away and out*): Mr. Birnbaum says he’s stuck up. WILLY: Get outa here!

BERNARD: If he doesn’t buckle down he’ll flunk math! (*He goes off*.)

LINDA: He’s right, Willy, you’ve gotta...

WILLY (*exploding at her*): There’s nothing the matter with him! You want him to be a worm like Bernard? He’s got spirit, personality (*As he speaks, Linda, almost in tears, exits into the living room. Willy is alone in the kitchen, wilting and staring. The leaves are gone. It is night again, and the apartment houses look down from behind.*)

WILLY: Loaded with it. Loaded! What is he stealing? He’s giving it back, isn’t he? Why is he stealing? What did I tell him? I never in my life told him anything but decent things.

(*Happy in pajamas has come down the stairs; Willy suddenly becomes aware of Happy’s presence.)*

HAPPY: Let’s go now, come on.

WILLY (*sitting down at the kitchen table*): Huh! Why did she have to wax the floors herself? Everytime she waxes the floors she keels over. She knows that!

HAPPY: Shh! Take it easy. What brought you back tonight?

WILLY: I got an awful scare. Nearly hit a kid in Yonkers. God! Why didn’t I go to Alaska with my brother Ben that time! Ben! That man was a genius, that man was success incarnate! What a mistake! He begged me to go.

HAPPY: Well, there’s no use in...

WILLY: You guys! There was a man started with the clothes on his back and ended up with diamond mines!

HAPPY: Boy, someday I’d like to know how he did it.

WILLY: What’s the mystery? The man knew what he wanted and went out and got it! Walked into a jungle, and comes out, the age of twenty-one, and he’s rich! The world is an oyster, but you don’t crack it open on a mattress!

HAPPY: Pop, I told you I’m gonna retire you for life.

WILLY: You’ll retire me for life on seventy goddam dollars a week? And your women and your car and your apartment, and you’ll retire me for life! Christ’s sake, I couldn’t get past Yonkers today! Where are you guys, where are you? The woods are burning! I can’t drive a car!

(*Charley has appeared in the doorway. He is a large man, slow of speech, laconic, immovable. In all he says, despite what he says, there is pity, and, now, trepidation. He has a robe over pajamas, slippers on his feet. He enters the kitchen.)*

CHARLEY: Everything all right? HAPPY: Yeah, Charley, everything’s...

WILLY: What’s the matter?

CHARLEY: I heard some noise. I thought something happened.

Can’t we do something about the walls? You sneeze in here, and in my house hats blow off.

HAPPY: Let’s go to bed, Dad. Come on. (*Charley signals to Happy to go*.)

WILLY: You go ahead, I’m not tired at the moment.

HAPPY (*to Willy*): Take it easy, huh? (*He exits*.)

WILLY: What’re you doin’ up?

CHARLEY (*sitting down at the kitchen table opposite Willy*): Couldn’t sleep good. I had a heartburn.

WILLY: Well, you don’t know how to eat.

CHARLEY: I eat with my mouth.

WILLY: No, you’re ignorant. You gotta know about vitamins and things like that.

CHARLEY: Come on, let’s shoot. Tire you out a little.

WILLY (*hesitantly*): All right. You got cards?

CHARLEY (*taking a deck from his pocket*): Yeah, I got them. Someplace. What is it with those vitamins?

WILLY (*dealing*): They build up your bones. Chemistry.

CHARLEY: Yeah, but there’s no bones in a heartburn.

WILLY: What are you talkin’ about? Do you know the first thing about it?

CHARLEY: Don’t get insulted.

WILLY: Don’t talk about something you don’t know anything about.

*(They are playing. Pause.)*

CHARLEY: What’re you doin’ home?

WILLY: A little trouble with the car.

CHARLEY: Oh. (*Pause*.) I’d like to take a trip to California.

WILLY: Don’t say.

CHARLEY: You want a job?

WILLY: I got a job, I told you that. (*After a slight pause*.) What the hell are you offering me a job for?

CHARLEY: Don’t get insulted.

WILLY: Don’t insult me.

CHARLEY: I don’t see no sense in it. You don’t have to go on this way.

WILLY: I got a good job. (*Slight pause*.) What do you keep comin’ in here for?

CHARLEY: You want me to go?

WILLY (*after a pause, withering*): I can’t understand it. He’s going back to Texas again. What the hell is that?

CHARLEY: Let him go.

WILLY: I got nothin’ to give him, Charley, I’m clean, I’m clean.

CHARLEY: He won’t starve. None a them starve. Forget about him.

WILLY: Then what have I got to remember?

CHARLEY: You take it too hard. To hell with it. When a deposit bottle is broken you don’t get your nickel back.

WILLY: That’s easy enough for you to say.

CHARLEY: That ain’t easy for me to say.

WILLY: Did you see the ceiling I put up in the living room?

CHARLEY: Yeah, that’s a piece of work. To put up a ceiling is a mystery to me. How do you do it?

WILLY: What’s the difference? CHARLEY: Well, talk about it. WILLY: You gonna put up a ceiling?

CHARLEY: How could I put up a ceiling?

WILLY: Then what the hell are you bothering me for?

CHARLEY: You’re insulted again.

WILLY: A man who can’t handle tools is not a man. You’re disgusting.

CHARLEY: Don’t call me disgusting, Willy.

*(Uncle Ben, carrying a valise and an umbrella, enters the forestage from around the right corner of the house. He is a stolid man, in his sixties, with a mustache and an authoritative air. He is utterly certain of his destiny, and there is an aura of far places about him. He enters exactly as Willy speaks.)*

WILLY: I’m getting awfully tired, Ben.

*(Ben’s music is heard. Ben looks around at everything.)*

CHARLEY: Good, keep playing; you’ll sleep better. Did you call me Ben?

*(Ben looks at his watch.)*

WILLY: That’s funny. For a second there you reminded me of my brother Ben.

BEN: I only have a few minutes*. (He strolls, inspecting the place.*

*Willy and Charley continue playing.)*

CHARLEY: You never heard from him again, heh? Since that time?

WILLY: Didn’t Linda tell you? Couple of weeks ago we got a letter from his wife in Africa. He died.

CHARLEY: That so.

BEN (*chuckling*): So this is Brooklyn, eh?

CHARLEY: Maybe you’re in for some of his money.

WILLY: Naa, he had seven sons. There’s just one opportunity I had with that man...

BEN: I must make a tram, William. There are several properties

I’m looking at in Alaska.

WILLY: Sure, sure! If I’d gone with him to Alaska that time, everything would’ve been totally different.

CHARLEY: Go on, you’d froze to death up there.

WILLY: What’re you talking about?

BEN: Opportunity is tremendous in Alaska, William. Surprised you’re not up there.

WILLY: Sure, tremendous.

CHARLEY: Heh?

WILLY: There was the only man I ever met who knew the answers.

CHARLEY: Who?

BEN: How are you all?

WILLY (*taking a pot, smiling*): Fine, fine.

CHARLEY: Pretty sharp tonight.

BEN: Is Mother living with you?

WILLY: No, she died a long time ago.

CHARLEY: Who?

BEN: That’s too bad. Fine specimen of a lady, Mother.

WILLY (*to Charley*): Heh?

BEN: I’d hoped to see the old girl.

CHARLEY: Who died?

BEN: Heard anything from Father, have you?

WILLY (*unnerved*): What do you mean, who died?

CHARLEY (*taking a pot*): What’re you talkin’ about?

BEN (*looking at his watch*): William, it’s half past eight!

WILLY (*as though to dispel his confusion he angrily stops Charley’s hand*). That’s my build!

CHARLEY: I put the ace...

WILLY: If you don’t know how to play the game I’m not gonna throw my money away on you!

CHARLEY (*rising*): It was my ace, for God’s sake!

WILLY: I’m through, I’m through!

BEN: When did Mother die?

WILLY: Long ago. Since the beginning you never knew how to play cards.

CHARLEY (*picks up the cards and goes to the door*): All right! Next time I’ll bring a deck with five aces.

WILLY: I don’t play that kind of game!

CHARLEY (*turning to him*): You ought to be ashamed of yourself!

WILLY: Yeah?

CHARLEY: Yeah! (*he goes out*.)

WILLY (*slamming the door after him*): Ignoramus!

BEN (*as Willy comes toward him through the wall-line of the kitchen*): So you’re William.

WILLY (*shaking Ben’s hand*): Ben! I’ve been waiting for you so long! What’s the answer? How did you do it?

BEN: Oh, there’s a story in that.

*(Linda enters the forestage, as of old, carrying the wash basket.)*

LINDA: Is this Ben?

BEN (*gallantly*): How do you do, my dear.

LINDA: Where’ve you been all these years? Willy’s always wondered why you...

WILLY (*pulling Ben away from her impatiently*): Where is Dad? Didn’t you follow him? How did you get started?

BEN: Well, I don’t know how much you remember.

WILLY: Well, I was just a baby, of course, only three or four years old...

BEN: Three years and eleven months.

WILLY: What a memory, Ben!

BEN: I have many enterprises, William, and I have never kept books.

WILLY: I remember I was sitting under the wagon in — was it

Nebraska?

BEN: It was South Dakota, and I gave you a bunch of wild flowers.

WILLY: I remember you walking away down some open road.

BEN (*laughing*): I was going to find Father in Alaska.

WILLY: Where is he?

BEN: At that age I had a very faulty view of geography, William. I discovered after a few days that I was heading due south, so instead of Alaska, I ended up in Africa.

LINDA: Africa!

WILLY: The Gold Coast!

BEN: Principally diamond mines.

LINDA: Diamond mines!

BEN: Yes, my dear. But I’ve only a few minutes...

WILLY: No! Boys! Boys! (*Young Biff and Happy appear*.) Listen to this. This is your Uncle Ben, a great man! Tell my boys, Ben!

BEN: Why, boys, when I was seventeen I walked into the jungle, and when I was twenty-one I walked out. (*He laughs*.) And by God I was rich.

WILLY (*to the boys*): You see what I been talking about? The greatest things can happen!

BEN (*glancing at his watch*): I have an appointment in Ketchikan Tuesday week.

WILLY: No, Ben! Please tell about Dad. I want my boys to hear. I want them to know the kind of stock they spring from. All I remember is a man with a big beard, and I was in Mamma’s lap, sitting around a fire, and some kind of high music.

BEN: His flute. He played the flute.

WILLY: Sure, the flute, that’s right!

*(New music is heard, a high, rollicking tune.)*

BEN: Father was a very great and a very wild-hearted man. We would start in Boston, and he’d toss the whole family into the wagon, and then he’d drive the team right across the country; through Ohio, and Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, and all the Western states. And we’d stop in the towns and sell the flutes that he’d made on the way. Great inventor, Father. With one gadget he made more in a week than a man like you could make in a lifetime.

WILLY: That’s just the way I’m bringing them up, Ben — rugged, well liked, all-around.

BEN: Yeah? (*To Biff*.) Hit that, boy — hard as you can. (*He pounds his stomach*.)

BIFF: Oh, no, sir!

BEN (*taking boxing stance*): Come on, get to me! (*He laughs*)

WILLY: Go to it, Biff! Go ahead, show him!

BIFF: Okay! (*He cocks his fists and starts in*.)

LINDA (*to Willy*): Why must he fight, dear?

BEN (*sparring with Biff*): Good boy! Good boy!

WILLY: How’s that, Ben, heh?

HAPPY: Give him the left, Biff!

LINDA: Why are you fighting?

BEN: Good boy! (*Suddenly comes in, trips Biff, and stands over him, the point of his umbrella poised over Biffs eye*.)

LINDA: Look out, Biff!

BIFF: Gee!

BEN (*Patting Biffs knee*): Never fight fair with a stranger, boy. You’ll never get out of the jungle that way. (*Taking Linda’s hand and bowing*.) It was an honor and a pleasure to meet you, Linda.

LINDA (*withdrawing her hand coldly, frightened*): Have a nice trip.

BEN (*to Willy*): And good luck with your — what do you do?

WILLY: Selling.

BEN: Yes. Well... (*He raises his hand in farewell to all*.)

WILLY: No, Ben, I don’t want you to think... (*He takes Ben’s arm to show him*) It’s Brooklyn, I know, but we hunt too.

BEN: Really, now.

WILLY: Oh, sure, there’s snakes and rabbits and — that’s why I moved out here. Why Biff can fell any one of these trees in no time! Boys! Go right over to where they’re building the apartment house and get some sand. We’re gonna rebuild the entire front stoop right now! Watch this, Ben!

BIFF: Yes, sir! On the double, Hap!

HAPPY (*as he and Biff run off*): I lost weight, Pop, you notice?

*(Charley enters in knickers, even before the boys are gone.)*

CHARLEY: Listen, if they steal any more from that building the watchman’ll put the cops on them!

LINDA (*to Willy*): Don’t let Biff...

*(Ben laughs lustily.)*

WILLY: You shoulda seen the lumber they brought home last week. At least a dozen six-by-tens worth all kinds a money.

CHARLEY: Listen, if that watchman...

WILLY: I gave them hell, understand. But I got a couple of fearless characters there.

CHARLEY: Willy, the jails are full of fearless characters.

BEN (*clapping Willy on the back, with a laugh at Charley*): And the stock exchange, friend!

WILLY (*joining in Ben’s laughter*): Where are the rest of your pants?

CHARLEY: My wife bought them.

WILLY: Now all you need is a golf club and you can go upstairs and go to sleep. (*To Ben*.) Great athlete! Between him and his son Bernard they can’t hammer a nail!

BERNARD (*rushing in*): The watchman’s chasing Biff!

WILLY (*angrily*): Shut up! He’s not stealing anything!

LINDA (*alarmed, hurrying off left*): Where is he? Biff, dear! (*She exits*.)

WILLY (*moving toward the left, away from Ben*): There’s nothing wrong. What’s the matter with you?

BEN: Nervy boy. Good!

WILLY (*laughing*): Oh, nerves of iron, that Biff!

CHARLEY: Don’t know what it is. My New England man comes back and he’s bleeding, they murdered him up there.

WILLY: It’s contacts, Charley, I got important contacts!

CHARLEY (*sarcastically*): Glad to hear it, Willy. Come in later, we’ll shoot a little casino. I’ll take some of your Portland money. (*He laughs at Willy and exits*.)

WILLY (*turning to Ben*): Business is bad, it’s murderous. But not for me, of course.

BEN: I’ll stop by on my way back to Africa.

WILLY (*longingly*): Can’t you stay a few days? You’re just what I need, Ben, because I — I have a fine position here, but I — well, Dad left when I was such a baby and I never had a chance to talk to him and I still feel — kind of temporary about myself.

BEN: I’ll be late for my train.

*(They are at opposite ends of the stage.)*

WILLY: Ben, my boys — can’t we talk? They’d go into the jaws of hell for me see, but I...

BEN: William, you’re being first-rate with your boys. Outstanding, manly chaps!

WILLY (*hanging on to his words*): Oh, Ben, that’s good to hear! Because sometimes I’m afraid that I’m not teaching them the right kind of — Ben, how should I teach them?

BEN (*giving great weight to each word, and with a certain vicious audacity*): William, when I walked into the jungle, I was seventeen. When I walked out I was twenty-one. And, by God, I was rich! (*He goes off into darkness around the right corner of the house*.)

WILLY: ...was rich! That’s just the spirit I want to imbue them with! To walk into a jungle! I was right! I was right! I was right!

*(Ben is gone, but Willy is still speaking to him as Linda, in nightgown and robe, enters the kitchen, glances around for Willy, then goes to the door of the house, looks out and sees him. Comes down to his left. He looks at her.)*

LINDA: Willy, dear? Willy?

WILLY: I was right!

LINDA: Did you have some cheese? (*He can’t answer*.) It’s very late, darling. Come to bed, heh?

WILLY (*looking straight up*): Gotta break your neck to see a star in this yard.

LINDA: You coming in?

WILLY: Whatever happened to that diamond watch fob? Remember? When Ben came from Africa that time? Didn’t he give me a watch fob with a diamond in it?

LINDA: You pawned it, dear. Twelve, thirteen years ago. For Biffs radio correspondence course.

WILLY: Gee, that was a beautiful thing. I’ll take a walk.

LINDA: But you’re in your slippers.

WILLY (*starting to go around the house at the left*): I was right! I was! (*Half to Linda, as he goes, shaking his head.*) What a man! There was a man worth talking to. I was right!

LINDA (*calling after Willy*): But in your slippers, Willy!

*(Willy is almost gone when Biff, in his pajamas, comes down the stairs and enters the kitchen.)*

BIFF: What is he doing out there?

LINDA: Sh!

BIFF: God Almighty. Mom, how long has he been doing this?

LINDA: Don’t, he’ll hear you.

BIFF: What the hell is the matter with him?

LINDA: It’ll pass by morning.

BIFF: Shouldn’t we do anything?

LINDA: Oh, my dear, you should do a lot of things, but there’s nothing to do, so go to sleep.

*(Happy comes down the stair and sits on the steps.)*

HAPPY: I never heard him so loud, Mom.

LINDA: Well, come around more often; you’ll hear him. (*She sits down at the table and mends the lining of Willy’s jacket*.)

BIFF: Why didn’t you ever write me about this, Mom?

LINDA: How would I write to you? For over three months you had no address.

BIFF: I was on the move. But you know I thought of you all the time. You know that, don’t you, pal?

LINDA: I know, dear, I know. But he likes to have a letter. Just to know that there’s still a possibility for better things.

BIFF: He’s not like this all the time, is he?

LINDA: It’s when you come home he’s always the worst.

BIFF: When I come home?

LINDA: When you write you’re coming, he’s all smiles, and talks about the future, and — he’s just wonderful. And then the closer you seem to come, the more shaky he gets, and then, by the time you get here, he’s arguing, and he seems angry at you. I think it’s just that maybe he can’t bring himself to — to open up to you. Why are you so hateful to each other? Why is that?

BIFF (*evasively*): I’m not hateful, Mom.

LINDA: But you no sooner come in the door than you’re fighting!

BIFF: I don’t know why. I mean to change. I’m tryin’, Mom, you understand?

LINDA: Are you home to stay now?

BIFF: I don’t know. I want to look around, see what’s doin’.

LINDA: Biff, you can’t look around all your life, can you?

BIFF: I just can’t take hold, Mom. I can’t take hold of some kind of a life.

LINDA: Biff, a man is not a bird, to come and go with the springtime.

BIFF: Your hair... (*He touches her hair*.) Your hair got so gray.

LINDA: Oh, it’s been gray since you were in high school. I just stopped dyeing it, that’s all.

BIFF: Dye it again, will ya? I don’t want my pal looking old. (*He smiles*.)

LINDA: You’re such a boy! You think you can go away for a year and... You’ve got to get it into your head now that one day you’ll knock on this door and there’ll be strange people here...

BIFF: What are you talking about? You’re not even sixty, Mom.

LINDA: But what about your father?

BIFF (*lamely*): Well, I meant him too.

HAPPY: He admires Pop.

LINDA: Biff, dear, if you don’t have any feeling for him, then you can’t have any feeling for me.

BIFF: Sure I can, Mom.

LINDA: No. You can’t just come to see me, because I love him. (*With a threat, but only a threat, of tears*.) He’s the dearest man in the world to me, and I won’t have anyone making him feel unwanted and low and blue. You’ve got to make up your mind now, darling, there’s no leeway any more. Either he’s your father and you pay him that respect, or else you’re not to come here. I know he’s not easy to get along with — nobody knows that better than me — but...

WILLY (*from the left, with a laugh*): Hey, hey, Biffo!

BIFF (*starting to go out after Willy*): What the hell is the matter with him? (*Happy stops him.*)

LINDA: Don’t — don’t go near him!

BIFF: Stop making excuses for him! He always, always wiped the floor with you. Never had an ounce of respect for you.

HAPPY: He’s always had respect for...

BIFF: What the hell do you know about it? HAPPY (*surlily*): Just don’t call him crazy!

BIFF: He’s got no character — Charley wouldn’t do this. Not in his own house — spewing out that vomit from his mind.

HAPPY: Charley never had to cope with what he’s got to.

BIFF: People are worse off than Willy Loman. Believe me, I’ve seen them!

LINDA: Then make Charley your father, Biff. You can’t do that, can you? I don’t say he’s a great man. Willy Loman never made a lot of money. His name was never in the paper. He’s not the finest character that ever lived. But he’s a human being, and a terrible thing is happening to him. So attention must be paid. He’s not to be allowed to fall into his grave like an old dog. Attention, attention must be finally paid to such a person. You called him crazy...

BIFF: I didn’t mean...

LINDA: No, a lot of people think he’s lost his — balance. But you don’t have to be very smart to know what his trouble is. The man is exhausted.

HAPPY: Sure!

LINDA: A small man can be just as exhausted as a great man. He works for a company thirty-six years this March, opens up unheard-of territories to their trademark, and now in his old age they take his salary away.

HAPPY (*indignantly*): I didn’t know that, Mom.

LINDA: You never asked, my dear! Now that you get your spending money someplace else you don’t trouble your mind with him.

HAPPY: But I gave you money last...

LINDA: Christmas time, fifty dollars! To fix the hot water it cost ninety-seven fifty! For five weeks he’s been on straight commission, like a beginner, an unknown!

BIFF: Those ungrateful bastards!

LINDA: Are they any worse than his sons? When he brought them business, when he was young, they were glad to see him. But now his old friends, the old buyers that loved him so and always found some order to hand him in a pinch — they’re all dead, retired. He used to be able to make six, seven calls a day in Boston. Now he takes his valises out of the car and puts them back and takes them out again and he’s exhausted. Instead of walking he talks now. He drives seven hundred miles, and when he gets there no one knows him any more, no one welcomes him. And what goes through a man’s mind, driving seven hundred miles home without having earned a cent? Why shouldn’t he talk to himself? Why? When he has to go to Charley and borrow fifty dollars a week and pretend to me that it’s his pay? How long can that go on? How long? You see what I’m sitting here and waiting for? And you tell me he has no character? The man who never worked a day but for your benefit? When does he get the medal for that? Is this his reward — to turn around at the age of sixty-three and find his sons, who he loved better than his life, one a philandering bum...

HAPPY: Mom!

LINDA: That’s all you are, my baby! (*To Biff*.) And you! What happened to the love you had for him? You were such pals! How you used to talk to him on the phone every night! How lonely he was till he could come home to you!

BIFF: All right, Mom. I’ll live here in my room, and I’ll get a job.

I’ll keep away from him, that’s all.

LINDA: No, Biff. You can’t stay here and fight all the time.

BIFF: He threw me out of this house, remember that.

LINDA: Why did he do that? I never knew why.

BIFF: Because I know he’s a fake and he doesn’t like anybody around who knows!

LINDA: Why a fake? In what way? What do you mean?

BIFF: Just don’t lay it all at my feet. It’s between me and him — that’s all I have to say. I’ll chip in from now on. He’ll settle for half my pay check. He’ll be all right. I’m going to bed. (*He starts for the stairs*.)

LINDA: He won’t be all right.

BIFF (*turning on the stairs, furiously*): I hate this city and I’ll stay here. Now what do you want?

LINDA: He’s dying, Biff.

*(Happy turns quickly to her, shocked.)*

BIFF (*after a pause*): Why is he dying?

LINDA: He’s been trying to kill himself.

BIFF (*with great horror*): How?

LINDA: I live from day to day.

BIFF: What’re you talking about?

LINDA: Remember I wrote you that he smashed up the car again? In February?

BIFF: Well?

LINDA: The insurance inspector came. He said that they have evidence. That all these accidents in the last year — weren’t — weren’t — accidents.

HAPPY: How can they tell that? That’s a lie.

LINDA: It seems there’s a woman... (*She takes a breath as*:)

BIFF *(sharply but contained*): What woman?

LINDA (*simultaneously*):... and this woman...

LINDA: What?

BIFF: Nothing. Go ahead.

LINDA: What did you say?

BIFF: Nothing, I just said what woman?

HAPPY: What about her?

LINDA: Well, it seems she was walking down the road and saw his car. She says that he wasn’t driving fast at all, and that he didn’t skid. She says he came to that little bridge, and then deliberately smashed into the railing, and it was only the shallowness of the water that saved him.

BIFF: Oh, no, he probably just fell asleep again.

LINDA: I don’t think he fell asleep.

BIFF: Why not?

LINDA: Last month... (*With great difficulty*.) Oh, boys, it’s so hard to say a thing like this! He’s just a big stupid man to you, but I tell you there’s more good in him than in many other people. (*She chokes, wipes her eyes*.) I was looking for a fuse. The lights blew out, and I went down the cellar. And behind the fuse box — it happened to fall out — was a length of rubber pipe — just short.

HAPPY: No kidding!

LINDA: There’s a little attachment on the end of it. I knew right away. And sure enough, on the bottom of the water heater there’s a new little nipple on the gas pipe.

HAPPY (*angrily*): That — jerk.

BIFF: Did you have it taken off?

LINDA: I’m — I’m ashamed to. How can I mention it to him? Every day I go down and take away that little rubber pipe. But, when he comes home, I put it back where it was. How can I insult him that way? I don’t know what to do. I live from day to day, boys. I tell you, I know every thought in his mind. It sounds so old-fashioned and silly, but I tell you he put his whole life into you and you’ve turned your backs on him. (*She is bent over in the chair, weeping, her face in her hands*.) Biff, I swear to God! Biff, his life is in your hands!

HAPPY (*to Biff*): How do you like that damned fool!

BIFF (*kissing her*): All right, pal, all right. It’s all settled now. I’ve been remiss. I know that, Mom. But now I’ll stay, and I swear to you, I’ll apply myself. (*Kneeling in front of her, in a fever of self-reproach*.) It’s just — you see, Mom, I don’t fit in business. Not that I won’t try. I’ll try, and I’ll make good.

HAPPY: Sure you will. The trouble with you in business was you never tried to please people.

BIFF: I know, I...

HAPPY: Like when you worked for Harrison’s. Bob Harrison said you were tops, and then you go and do some damn fool thing like whistling whole songs in the elevator like a comedian.

BIFF (*against Happy*): So what? I like to whistle sometimes.

HAPPY: You don’t raise a guy to a responsible job who whistles in the elevator!

LINDA: Well, don’t argue about it now.

HAPPY: Like when you’d go off and swim in the middle of the day instead of taking the line around.

BIFF (*his resentment rising*): Well, don’t you run off? You take off sometimes, don’t you? On a nice summer day?

HAPPY: Yeah, but I cover myself!

LINDA: Boys!

HAPPY: If I’m going to take a fade the boss can call any number where I’m supposed to be and they’ll swear to him that I just left. I’ll tell you something that I hate so say, Biff, but in the business world some of them think you’re crazy.

BIFF (*angered*): Screw the business world!

HAPPY: All right, screw it! Great, but cover yourself!

LINDA: Hap, Hap.

BIFF: I don’t care what they think! They’ve laughed at Dad for years, and you know why? Because we don’t belong in this nuthouse of a city! We should be mixing cement on some open plain or — or carpenters. A carpenter is allowed to whistle! (*Willy walks in from the entrance of the house, at left*.)

WILLY: Even your grandfather was better than a carpenter. (*Pause. They watch him*.) You never grew up. Bernard does not whistle in the elevator, I assure you.

BIFF (*as though to laugh Willy out of it*): Yeah, but you do, Pop.

WILLY: I never in my life whistled in an elevator! And who in the business world thinks I’m crazy?

BIFF: I didn’t mean it like that, Pop. Now don’t make a whole thing out of it, will ya?

WILLY: Go back to the West! Be a carpenter, a cowboy, enjoy yourself!

LINDA: Willy, he was just saying...

WILLY: I heard what he said!

HAPPY (*trying to quiet Willy*): Hey, Pop, come on now...

WILLY (*continuing over Happy’s line*): They laugh at me, heh? Go to Filene’s, go to the Hub, go to Slattery’s, Boston. Call out the name Willy Loman and see what happens! Big shot!

BIFF: All right, Pop.

WILLY: Big!

BIFF: All right!

WILLY: Why do you always insult me?

BIFF: I didn’t say a word. (*To Linda*.) Did I say a word?

LINDA: He didn’t say anything, Willy.

WILLY (*going to the doorway of the living room*): All right, good night, good night.

LINDA: Willy, dear, he just decided...

WILLY (*to Biff*): If you get tired hanging around tomorrow, paint the ceiling I put up in the living room.

BIFF: I’m leaving early tomorrow.

HAPPY: He’s going to see Bill Oliver, Pop.

WILLY (*interestedly*): Oliver? For what?

BIFF (*with reserve, but trying, trying*): He always said he’d stake me. I’d like to go into business, so maybe I can take him up on it.

LINDA: Isn’t that wonderful?

WILLY: Don’t interrupt. What’s wonderful about it? There’s fifty men in the City of New York who’d stake him. (*To Biff*.) Sporting goods?

BIFF: I guess so. I know something about it and...

WILLY: He knows something about it! You know sporting goods better than Spalding, for God’s sake! How much is he giving you?

BIFF: I don’t know, I didn’t even see him yet, but...

WILLY: Then what’re you talkin’ about?

BIFF (*getting angry*): Well, all I said was I’m gonna see him, that’s all!

WILLY (*turning away*): Ah, you’re counting your chickens again.

BIFF (*starting left for the stairs*.): Oh, Jesus, I’m going to sleep!

WILLY (*calling after him*): Don’t curse in this house!

BIFF (*turning*): Since when did you get so clean?

HAPPY (*trying to stop them*): Wait a...

WILLY: Don’t use that language to me! I won’t have it!

HAPPY (*grabbing Biff, shouts*): Wait a minute! I got an idea. I got a feasible idea. Come here, Biff, let’s talk this over now, let’s talk some sense here. When I was down in Florida last time, I thought of a great idea to sell sporting goods. It just came back to me. You and I, Biff — we have a line, the Loman Line. We train a couple of weeks, and put on a couple of exhibitions, see?

WILLY: That’s an idea!

HAPPY: Wait! We form two basketball teams, see? Two waterpolo teams. We play each other. It’s a million dollars’ worth of publicity. Two brothers, see? The Loman Brothers. Displays in the Royal Palms — all the hotels. And banners over the ring and the basketball court: »Loman Brothers«. Baby, we could sell sporting goods!

WILLY: That is a one-million-dollar idea!

LINDA: Marvelous!

BIFF: I’m in great shape as far as that’s concerned.

HAPPY: And the beauty of it is, Biff, it wouldn’t be like a business. We’d be out playin’ ball again...

BIFF (*enthused*): Yeah, that’s...

WILLY: Million-dollar...

HAPPY: And you wouldn’t get fed up with it, Biff. It’d be the family again. There’d be the old honor, and comradeship, and if you wanted to go off for a swim or somethin’ — well, you’d do it! Without some smart cooky gettin’ up ahead of you!

WILLY: Lick the world! You guys together could absolutely lick the civilized world.

BIFF: I’ll see Oliver tomorrow. Hap, if we could work that out...

LINDA: Maybe things are beginning to...

WILLY (*wildly enthused, to Linda*): Stop interrupting! (*To Biff*.) But don’t wear sport jacket and slacks when you see Oliver.

BIFF: No, I’ll...

WILLY: A business suit, and talk as little as possible, and don’t crack any jokes.

BIFF: He did like me. Always liked me.

LINDA: He loved you!

WILLY (*to Linda*): Will you stop! (*To Biff*.) Walk in very serious. You are not applying for a boy’s job. Money is to pass. Be quiet, fine, and serious. Everybody likes a kidder, but nobody lends him money.

HAPPY: I’ll try to get some myself, Biff. I’m sure I can.

WILLY: I see great things for you kids, I think your troubles are over. But remember, start big and you’ll end big. Ask for fifteen. How much you gonna ask for?

BIFF: Gee, I don’t know...

WILLY: And don’t say »Gee«. »Gee« is a boy’s word. A man walking in for fifteen thousand dollars does not say »Gee!«

BIFF: Ten, I think, would be top though.

WILLY: Don’t be so modest. You always started too low. Walk in with a big laugh. Don’t look worried. Start off with a couple of your good stones to lighten things up. It’s not what you say, it’s how you say it — because personality always wins the day.

LINDA: Oliver always thought the highest of him...

WILLY: Will you let me talk?

BIFF: Don’t yell at her, Pop, will ya?

WILLY (*angrily*): I was talking, wasn’t I?

BIFF: I don’t like you yelling at her all the time, and I’m tellin’ you, that’s all.

WILLY: What’re you, takin’ over this house?

LINDA: Willy...

WILLY (*turning to her*): Don’t take his side all the time, goddammit!

BIFF (*furiously*): Stop yelling at her!

WILLY (*suddenly* pulling on his cheek, beaten down, guilt ridden): Give my best to Bill Oliver — he may remember me. (*He exits through the living room doorway*.)

LINDA (*her voice subdued*): What’d you have to start that for? (*Biff turns away*.) You see how sweet he was as soon as you talked hopefully? (*She goes over to Biff*.) Come up and say good night to him. Don’t let him go to bed that way.

HAPPY: Come on, Biff, let’s buck him up.

LINDA: Please, dear. Just say good night. It takes so little to make him happy. Come. (*She goes through the living room doorway, calling upstairs from within the living room*.) Your pajamas are hanging in the bathroom, Willy!

HAPPY (*looking toward where Linda went out*): What a woman! They broke the mold when they made her. You know that, Biff?

BIFF: He’s off salary. My God, working on commission!

HAPPY: Well, let’s face it: he’s no hot-shot selling man. Except that sometimes, you have to admit, he’s a sweet personality.

BIFF (*deciding*): Lend me ten bucks, will ya? I want to buy some new ties.

HAPPY: I’ll take you to a place I know. Beautiful stuff. Wear one of my striped shirts tomorrow.

BIFF: She got gray. Mom got awful old. Gee, I’m gonna go in to Oliver tomorrow and knock him for a...

HAPPY: Come on up. Tell that to Dad. Let’s give him a whirl. Come on.

BIFF (*steamed up*): You know, with ten thousand bucks, boy!

HAPPY (*as they go into the living room*): That’s the talk, Biff, that’s the first time I’ve heard the old confidence out of you! (*From within the living room, fading off*.) You’re gonna live with me, kid, and any babe you want just say the word... (*The last lines are hardly heard. They are mounting the stairs to their parents’ bedroom*.)

LINDA (*entering her bedroom and addressing Willy, who is in the bathroom. She is straightening the bed for him*): Can you do

anything about the shower? It drips.

WILLY (*from the bathroom*): All of a sudden everything falls to pieces. Goddam plumbing, oughta be sued, those people. I hardly finished putting it in and the thing... (*His words rumble off*.)

LINDA: I’m just wondering if Oliver will remember him. You think he might?

WILLY (*coming out of the bathroom in his pajamas*): Remember him? What’s the matter with you, you crazy? If he’d’ve stayed with Oliver he’d be on top by now! Wait’ll Oliver gets a look at him. You don’t know the average caliber any more. The average young man today — (*he is getting into bed*) — is got a caliber of zero. Greatest thing in the world for him was to bum around.

*(Biff and Happy enter the bedroom. Slight pause.)*

WILLY (*stops short, looking at Biff*): Glad to hear it, boy.

HAPPY: He wanted to say good night to you, sport.

WILLY (*to Biff*): Yeah. Knock him dead, boy. What’d you want to tell me?

BIFF: Just take it easy, Pop. Good night. (*He turns to go*.)

WILLY (*unable to resist*): And if anything falls off the desk while you’re talking to him — like a package or something — don’t you pick it up. They have office boys for that.

LINDA: I’ll make a big breakfast...

WILLY: Will you let me finish? (*To Biff*.) Tell him you were in the business in the West. Not farm work.

BIFF: All right, Dad.

LINDA: I think everything...

WILLY (*going right through her speech*): And don’t undersell yourself. No less than fifteen thousand dollars.

BIFF (*unable to bear him*): Okay. Good night, Mom. (*He starts moving*.)

WILLY: Because you got a greatness in you, Biff, remember that. You got all kinds a greatness... (*He lies back, exhausted. Biff walks out*.)

LINDA (*calling after Biff*): Sleep well, darling!

HAPPY: I’m gonna get married, Mom. I wanted to tell you.

LINDA: Go to sleep, dear.

HAPPY (*going*): I just wanted to tell you.

WILLY: Keep up the good work. (*Happy exits*.) God... remember that Ebbets Field game? The championship of the city?

LINDA: Just rest. Should I sing to you?

WILLY: Yeah. Sing to me. (*Linda hums a soft lullaby*.) When that team came out — he was the tallest, remember?

LINDA: Oh, yes. And in gold.

*(Biff enters the darkened kitchen, takes a cigarette, and leaves the house. He comes downstage into a golden pool of light. He smokes, staring at the night.)*

WILLY: Like a young god. Hercules — something like that. And the sun, the sun all around him. Remember how he waved to me? Right up from the field, with the representatives of three colleges standing by? And the buyers I brought, and the cheers when he came out — Loman, Loman, Loman! God Almighty, he’ll be great yet. A star like that, magnificent, can never really fade away!

*(The light on Willy is fading. The gas heater begins to glow through the kitchen wall, near the stairs, a blue flame beneath red coils.)*

LINDA (*timidly*): Willy dear, what has he got against you?

WILLY: I’m so tired. Don’t talk any more.

*(Biff slowly returns to the kitchen. He stops, stares toward the heater.)*

LINDA: Will you ask Howard to let you work in New York?

WILLY: First thing in the morning. Everything’ll be all right.

*(Biff reaches behind the heater and draws out a length of rubber tubing. He is horrified and turns his head toward Willy’s room, still dimly lit, from which the strains of Linda’s desperate but monotonous humming rise.)*

WILLY (*staring through the window into the moonlight*): Gee, look at the moon moving between the buildings!

*(Biff wraps the tubing around his hand and quickly goes up the stairs.)*

ACT TWO

*Music is heard, gay and bright. The curtain rises as the music fades away. Willy, in shirt sleeves, is sitting at the kitchen table, sipping coffee, his hat in his lap. Linda is filling his cup when she can.*

WILLY: Wonderful coffee. Meal in itself.

LINDA: Can I make you some eggs?

WILLY: No. Take a breath.

LINDA: You look so rested, dear.

WILLY: I slept like a dead one. First time in months. Imagine, sleeping till ten on a Tuesday morning. Boys left nice and early, heh?

LINDA: They were out of here by eight o’clock.

WILLY: Good work!

LINDA: It was so thrilling to see them leaving together. I can’t get over the shaving lotion in this house!

WILLY (*smiling*): Mmm...

LINDA: Biff was very changed this morning. His whole attitude seemed to be hopeful. He couldn’t wait to get downtown to see Oliver.

WILLY: He’s heading for a change. There’s no question, there simply are certain men that take longer to get — solidified.

How did he dress?

LINDA: His blue suit. He’s so handsome in that suit. He could be a — anything in that suit!

*(Willy gets up from the table. Linda holds his jacket for him.)*

WILLY: There’s no question, no question at all. Gee, on the way home tonight I’d like to buy some seeds.

LINDA (*laughing*): That’d be wonderful. But not enough sun gets back there. Nothing’ll grow any more.

WILLY: You wait, kid, before it’s all over we’re gonna get a little place out in the country, and I’ll raise some vegetables, a cou-

ple of chickens...

LINDA: You’ll do it yet, dear.

*(Willy walks out of his jacket. Linda follows him.)*

WILLY: And they’ll get married, and come for a weekend. I’d build a little guest house. ‘Cause I got so many fine tools, all I’d need would be a little lumber and some peace of mind.

LINDA (*joyfully*): I sewed the lining...

WILLY: I could build two guest houses, so they’d both come. Did he decide how much he’s going to ask Oliver for?

LINDA (*getting him into the jacket*): He didn’t mention it, but I imagine ten or fifteen thousand. You going to talk to Howard today?

WILLY: Yeah. I’ll put it to him straight and simple. He’ll just have to take me off the road.

LINDA: And Willy, don’t forget to ask for a little advance, because we’ve got the insurance premium. It’s the grace period now.

WILLY: That’s a hundred... ?

LINDA: A hundred and eight, sixty-eight. Because we’re a little short again.

WILLY: Why are we short?

LINDA: Well, you had the motor job on the car...

WILLY: That goddam Studebaker!

LINDA: And you got one more payment on the refrigerator...

WILLY: But it just broke again!

LINDA: Well, it’s old, dear.

WILLY: I told you we should’ve bought a well-advertised machine.

Charley bought a General Electric and it’s twenty years old and it’s still good, that son-of-a-bitch.

LINDA: But, Willy...

WILLY: Whoever heard of a Hastings refrigerator? Once in my life I would like to own something outright before it’s broken! I’m always in a race with the junkyard! I just finished paying for the car and it’s on its last legs. The refrigerator consumes belts like a goddam maniac. They time those things. They time them so when you finally paid for them, they’re used up.

LINDA (*buttoning up his jacket as he unbuttons it*): All told, about two hundred dollars would carry us, dear. But that includes the last payment on the mortgage. After this payment, Willy, the house belongs to us.

WILLY: It’s twenty-five years!

LINDA: Biff was nine years old when we bought it.

WILLY: Well, that’s a great thing. To weather a twenty-five year mortgage is...

LINDA: It’s an accomplishment.

WILLY: All the cement, the lumber, the reconstruction I put in this house! There ain’t a crack to be found in it any more.

LINDA: Well, it served its purpose.

WILLY: What purpose? Some stranger’ll come along, move in, and that’s that. If only Biff would take this house, and raise a family... (*He starts to go*.) Good-by, I’m late.

LINDA (*suddenly remembering*): Oh, I forgot! You’re supposed to meet them for dinner.

WILLY: Me?

LINDA: At Frank’s Chop House on Forty-eighth near Sixth Avenue.

WILLY: Is that so! How about you?

LINDA: No, just the three of you. They’re gonna blow you to a big meal!

WILLY: Don’t say! Who thought of that?

LINDA: Biff came to me this morning, Willy, and he said, »Tell Dad, we want to blow him to a big meal.« Be there six o’clock. You and your two boys are going to have dinner.

WILLY: Gee whiz! That’s really somethin’. I’m gonna knock

Howard for a loop, kid. I’ll get an advance, and I’ll come home with a New York job. Goddammit, now I’m gonna do it!

LINDA: Oh, that’s the spirit, Willy!

WILLY: I will never get behind a wheel the rest of my life!

LINDA: It’s changing. Willy, I can feel it changing!

WILLY: Beyond a question. G’by, I’m late. (*He starts to go again*.)

LINDA (*calling after him as she runs to the kitchen table for a handkerchief*): You got your glasses?

WILLY: (*feels for them, then comes back in*): Yeah, yeah, got my glasses.

LINDA: (*giving him the handkerchief*): And a handkerchief.

WILLY: Yeah, handkerchief.

LINDA: And your saccharine?

WILLY: Yeah, my saccharine.

LINDA: Be careful on the subway stairs. (*She kisses him, and a silk stocking is seen hanging from her hand. Willy notices it*.)

WILLY: Will you stop mending stockings? At least while I’m in the house. It gets me nervous. I can’t tell you. Please.

*(Linda hides the stocking in her hand as she follows Willy across the forestage in front of the house.)*

LINDA: Remember, Frank’s Chop House.

WILLY (*passing the apron*): Maybe beets would grow out there.

LINDA (*laughing*): But you tried so many times.

WILLY: Yeah. Well, don’t work hard today. (*He disappears around the right corner of the house*.)

LINDA: Be careful!

*(As Willy vanishes, Linda waves to him. Suddenly the phone rings. She runs across the stage and into the kitchen and lifts it.)*

LINDA: Hello? Oh, Biff. I’m so glad you called, I just... Yes, sure, I just told him. Yes, he’ll be there for dinner at six o’clock, I didn’t forget. Listen, I was just dying to tell you. You know that little rubber pipe I told you about? That he connected to the gas heater? I finally decided to go down the cellar this morning and take it away and destroy it. But it’s gone! Imagine? He took it away himself, it isn’t there! (*She listens*.) When? Oh, then you took it. Oh — nothing, it’s just that I’d hoped he’d taken it away himself. Oh, I’m not worried, darling, because this morning he left in such high spirits, it was like the old days! I’m not afraid any more. Did Mr. Oliver see you?... Well, you wait there then. And make a nice impression on him, darling. Just don’t perspire too much before you see him. And have a nice time with Dad. He may have big news too!... That’s right, a New York job. And be sweet to him tonight, dear. Be loving to him. Because he’s only a little boat looking for a harbor. (*She is trembling with sorrow and joy*.) Oh, that’s wonderful, Biff, you’ll save his life. Thanks, darling. Just put your arm around him when he comes into the restaurant. Give him a smile. That’s the boy... Good-by, dear. You got your comb?... That’s fine. Good-by, Biff dear. (*In the middle of her speech, Howard Wagner, thirty-six, wheels on a small typewriter table on which is a wire-recording machine and proceeds to plug it in. This is on the left forestage. Light slowly fades on Linda as it rises on Howard. Howard is intent on threading the machine and only glances over his shoulder as Willy appears*.)

WILLY: Pst! Pst!

HOWARD: Hello, Willy, come in.

WILLY: Like to have a little talk with you, Howard.

HOWARD: Sorry to keep you waiting. I’ll be with you in a minute.

WILLY: What’s that, Howard?

HOWARD: Didn’t you ever see one of these? Wire recorder.

WILLY: Oh. Can we talk a minute?

HOWARD: Records things. Just got delivery yesterday. Been driving me crazy, the most terrific machine I ever saw in my life. I was up all night with it.

WILLY: What do you do with it?

HOWARD: I bought it for dictation, but you can do anything with it. Listen to this. I had it home last night. Listen to what I picked up. The first one is my daughter. Get this. (*He flicks the switch and »Roll out the Barrel« is heard being whistled.*) Listen to that kid whistle.

WILLY: That is lifelike, isn’t it?

HOWARD: Seven years old. Get that tone.

WILLY: Ts, ts. Like to ask a little favor if you...

*(The whistling breaks off, and the voice of Howard’s daughter is heard.)*

HIS DAUGHTER: »Now you, Daddy. »

HOWARD: She’s crazy for me! (*Again the same song is whistled*.) That’s me! Ha! (*He winks*).

WILLY: You’re very good!

*(The whistling breaks off again. The machine runs silent for a moment.)*

HOWARD: Sh! Get this now, this is my son.

HIS SON: »The capital of Alabama is Montgomery; the capital of Arizona is Phoenix; the capital of Arkansas is Little Rock; the capital of California is Sacramento...« (*and on, and on*.)

HOWARD (*holding up five fingers*): Five years old. Willy!

WILLY: He’ll make an announcer some day!

HIS SON (*continuing*): »The capital...«

HOWARD: Get that — alphabetical order! (*The machine breaks off suddenly*.) Wait a minute. The maid kicked the plug out.

WILLY: It certainly is a...

HOWARD: Sh, for God’s sake!

HIS SON: »It’s nine o’clock, Bulova watch time. So I have to go to sleep.«

WILLY: That really is...

HOWARD: Wait a minute! The next is my wife. (*They wait*).

HOWARD’S VOICE: »Go on, say something.« (*Pause*.) »Well, you gonna talk?«

HIS WIFE: »I can’t think of anything.«

HOWARD’S VOICE: »Well, talk — it’s turning.«

HIS WIFE (*shyly, beaten*): »Hello.« (*Silence*.) »Oh, Howard, I can’t talk into this...«

HOWARD (*snapping the machine off*): That was my wife.

WILLY: That is a wonderful machine. Can we...

HOWARD: I tell you, Willy, I’m gonna take my camera, and my bandsaw, and all my hobbies, and out they go. This is the most fascinating relaxation I ever found.

WILLY: I think I’ll get one myself.

HOWARD: Sure, they’re only a hundred and a half. You can’t do without it. Supposing you wanna hear Jack Benny, see? But you can’t be at home at that hour. So you tell the maid to turn the radio on when Jack Benny comes on, and this automatically goes on with the radio...

WILLY: And when you come home you...

HOWARD: You can come home twelve o’clock, one o’clock, any time you like, and you get yourself a Coke and sit yourself down, throw the switch, and there’s Jack Benny’s program in the middle of the night!

WILLY: I’m definitely going to get one. Because lots of times I’m on the road, and I think to myself, what I must be missing on the radio!

HOWARD: Don’t you have a radio in the car?

WILLY: Well, yeah, but who ever thinks of turning it on?

HOWARD: Say, aren’t you supposed to be in Boston?

WILLY: That’s what I want to talk to you about, Howard. You got a minute? (*He draws a chair in from the wing*).

HOWARD: What happened? What’re you doing here?

WILLY: Well...

HOWARD: You didn’t crack up again, did you?

WILLY: Oh, no. No...

HOWARD: Geez, you had me worried there for a minute. What’s the trouble?

WILLY: Well, tell you the truth, Howard. I’ve come to the decision that I’d rather not travel any more.

HOWARD: Not travel! Well, what’ll you do?

WILLY: Remember, Christmas time, when you had the party here? You said you’d try to think of some spot for me here in town.

HOWARD: With us?

WILLY: Well, sure.

HOWARD: Oh, yeah, yeah. I remember. Well, I couldn’t think of anything for you, Willy.

WILLY: I tell ya, Howard. The kids are all grown up, y’know. I

don’t need much any more. If I could take home — well, sixtyfive dollars a week, I could swing it.

HOWARD: Yeah, but Willy, see I...

WILLY: I tell ya why. Howard. Speaking frankly and between the two of us, y’know — I’m just a little tired.

HOWARD: Oh, I could understand that, Willy. But you’re a road man, Willy, and we do a road business. We’ve only got a half-

dozen salesmen on the floor here.

WILLY: God knows, Howard. I never asked a favor of any man.

But I was with the firm when your father used to carry you in here in his arms.

 HOWARD: I know that, Willy, but...

WILLY: Your father came to me the day you were born and asked me what I thought of the name of Howard, may he rest in peace.

HOWARD: I appreciate that, Willy, but there just is no spot here for you. If I had a spot I’d slam you right in, but I just don’t have a single solitary spot. (*He looks for his lighter. Willy has picked it up and gives it to him. Pause*.)

WILLY (*with increasing anger*): Howard, all I need to set my table is fifty dollars a week.

HOWARD: But where am I going to put you, kid?

WILLY: Look, it isn’t a question of whether I can sell merchandise, is it?

HOWARD: No, but it’s a business, kid, and everybody’s gotta pull his own weight.

WILLY (*desperately*): Just let me tell you a story. Howard...

HOWARD: ‘Cause you gotta admit, business is business.

WILLY (*angrily*): Business is definitely business, but just listen for a minute. You don’t understand this. When I was a boy — eighteen, nineteen — I was already on the road. And there was a question in my mind as to whether selling had a future for me. Because in those days I had a yearning to go to Alaska. See, there were three gold strikes in one month in Alaska, and I felt like going out. Just for the ride, you might say.

HOWARD *(barely interested*): Don’t say.

WILLY: Oh, yeah, my father lived many years in Alaska. He was an adventurous man. We’ve got quite a little streak of selfreliance in our family. I thought I’d go out with my older brother and try to locate him, and maybe settle in the North with the old man. And I was almost decided to go, when I met a salesman in the Parker House. His name was Dave Singleman. And he was eighty-four years old, and he’d drummed merchandise in thirty-one states. And old Dave, he’d go up to his room, y’understand, put on his green velvet slippers — I’ll never forget — and pick up his phone and call the buyers, and without ever leaving his room, at the age of eighty-four, he made his living. And when I saw that, I realized that selling was the greatest career a man could want. ‘Cause what could be more satisfying than to be able to go, at the age of eightyfour, into twenty or thirty different cities, and pick up a phone, and be remembered and loved and helped by so many different people? Do you know? When he died — and by the way he died the death of a salesman, in his green velvet slippers in the smoker of the New York, New Haven and Hartford, going into Boston — when he died, hundreds of salesmen and buyers were at his funeral. Things were sad on a lotta trains for months after that. (*He stands up. Howard has not looked at him*.) In those days there was personality in it, Howard. There was respect, and comradeship, and gratitude in it. Today, it’s all cut and dried, and there’s no chance for bringing friendship to bear — or personality. You see what I mean? They don’t know me any more.

HOWARD (*moving away, to the right*): That’s just the thing, Willy.

WILLY: If I had forty dollars a week — that’s all I’d need. Forty dollars, Howard.

HOWARD: Kid, I can’t take blood from a stone, I...

WILLY (*desperation is on him now*): Howard, the year Al Smith was nominated, your father came to me and...

HOWARD (*starting to go off*): I’ve got to see some people, kid.

WILLY (*stopping him*). I’m talking about your father! There were promises made across this desk! You mustn’t tell me you’ve got people to see — I put thirty-four years into this firm, Howard, and now I can’t pay my insurance! You can’t eat the orange and throw the peel away — a man is not a piece of fruit! (*After a pause*.) Now pay attention. Your father — in 1928 I had a big year. I averaged a hundred and seventy dollars a week in commissions.

HOWARD (*impatiently*): Now, Willy, you never averaged...

WILLY (*banging his hand on the desk*): I averaged a hundred and seventy dollars a week in the year of 1928! And your father came to me — or rather, I was in the office here — it was right over this desk — and he put his hand on my shoulder...

HOWARD (*getting up*): You’ll have to excuse me, Willy, I gotta see some people. Pull yourself together. (*Going out*.) I’ll be back in a little while. (*On Howard’s exit, the light on his chair grows very bright and strange*.)

WILLY: Pull myself together! What the hell did I say to him? My God, I was yelling at him! How could I? (*Willy breaks off, staring at the light, which occupies the chair, animating it. He approaches this chair, standing across the desk from it*.) Frank, Frank, don’t you remember what you told me that time? How you put your hand on my shoulder, and Frank... (*He leans on the desk and as he speaks the dead man’s name he accidentally switches on the recorder, and instantly*)

HOWARD’S SON: »... of New York is Albany. The capital of Ohio is Cincinnati, the capital of Rhode Island is...« (*The recitation continues*.)

WILLY (*leaping away with fright, shouting*): Ha, Howard! Howard! Howard!

HOWARD (*rushing in*): What happened?

WILLY (*pointing at the machine, which continues nasally, childishly, with the capital cities*): Shut it off! Shut it off!

HOWARD (*pulling the plug out*): Look, Willy...

WILLY (*pressing his hands to his eyes*): I gotta get myself some coffee. I’ll get some coffee... (*Willy starts to walk out. Howard stops him*.)

HOWARD (*rolling up the cord*): Willy, look...

WILLY: I’ll go to Boston.

HOWARD: Willy, you can’t go to Boston for us.

WILLY: Why can’t I go?

HOWARD: I don’t want you to represent us. I’ve been meaning to tell you for a long time now.

WILLY: Howard, are you firing me?

HOWARD: I think you need a good long rest, Willy.

WILLY: Howard...

HOWARD: And when you feel better, come back, and we’ll see if we can work something out.

WILLY: But I gotta earn money, Howard. I’m in no position to...

HOWARD: Where are your sons? Why don’t your sons give you a hand?

WILLY: They’re working on a very big deal.

HOWARD: This is no time for false pride, Willy. You go to your sons and you tell them that you’re tired. You’ve got two great boys, haven’t you?

WILLY: Oh, no question, no question, but in the meantime...

HOWARD: Then that’s that, heh?

WILLY: All right, I’ll go to Boston tomorrow.

HOWARD: No, no.

WILLY: I can’t throw myself on my sons. I’m not a cripple!

HOWARD: Look, kid, I’m busy this morning.

WILLY (*grasping Howard’s arm*): Howard, you’ve got to let me go to Boston!

HOWARD (*hard, keeping himself under control*): I’ve got a line of people to see this morning. Sit down, take five minutes, and pull yourself together, and then go home, will ya? I need the office, Willy. (*He starts to go, turns, remembering the recorder, starts to push off the table holding the recorder*.) Oh, yeah. Whenever you can this week, stop by and drop off the samples. You’ll feel better, Willy, and then come back and we’ll talk. Pull yourself together, kid, there’s people outside. (*Howard exits, pushing the table off left. Willy stares into space, exhausted. Now the music is heard — Ben’s music — first distantly, then closer, closer. As Willy speaks, Ben enters from the right. He carries valise and umbrella*.)

WILLY: Oh, Ben, how did you do it? What is the answer? Did you wind up the Alaska deal already?

BEN: Doesn’t take much time if you know what you’re doing. Just a short business trip. Boarding ship in an hour. Wanted to say good-by.

WILLY: Ben, I’ve got to talk to you.

BEN (*glancing at his watch*): Haven’t the time, William.

WILLY (*crossing the apron to Ben*): Ben, nothing’s working out. I don’t know what to do.

BEN: Now, look here, William. I’ve bought timberland in Alaska and I need a man to look after things for me.

WILLY: God, timberland! Me and my boys in those grand outdoors?

BEN: You’ve a new continent at your doorstep, William. Get out of these cities, they’re full of talk and time payments and courts of law. Screw on your fists and you can fight for a fortune up there.

WILLY: Yes, yes! Linda, Linda!

*(Linda enters as of old, with the wash.)*

LINDA: Oh, you’re back?

BEN: I haven’t much time.

WILLY: No, wait! Linda, he’s got a proposition for me in Alaska.

LINDA: But you’ve got... (*To Ben*.) He’s got a beautiful job here.

WILLY: But in Alaska, kid, I could...

LINDA: You’re doing well enough, Willy!

BEN (*to Linda*): Enough for what, my dear?

LINDA (*frightened of Ben and angry at him*): Don’t say those things to him! Enough to be happy right here, right now. (*To Willy, while Ben laughs*.) Why must everybody conquer the world? You’re well liked, and the boys love you, and someday

— (*To Ben*) — why, old man Wagner told him just the other day that if he keeps it up he’ll be a member of the firm, didn’t he, Willy?

WILLY: Sure, sure. I am building something with this firm, Ben, and if a man is building something he must be on the right track, mustn’t he?

BEN: What are you building? Lay your hand on it. Where is it?

WILLY (*hesitantly*): That’s true, Linda, there’s nothing.

LINDA: Why? (*To Ben*.) There’s a man eighty-four years old –

WILLY: That’s right, Ben, that’s right. When I look at that man I say, what is there to worry about?

BEN: Bah!

WILLY: It’s true, Ben. All he has to do is go into any city, pick up the phone, and he’s making his living and you know why?

BEN (*picking up his valise*): I’ve got to go.

WILLY (*holding Ben back*): Look at this boy!

*(Biff, in his high school sweater, enters carrying suitcase. Happy carries Biffs shoulder guards, gold helmet, and football pants.)*

WILLY: Without a penny to his name, three great universities are begging for him, and from there the sky’s the limit, because it’s not what you do, Ben. It’s who you know and the smile on your face! It’s contacts, Ben, contacts! The whole wealth of Alaska passes over the lunch table at the Commodore Hotel, and that’s the wonder, the wonder of this country, that a man can end with diamonds here on the basis of being liked! (*He turns to Biff*.) And that’s why when you get out on that field today it’s important. Because thousands of people will be rooting for you and loving you. (*To Ben, who has again begun to leave*.) And Ben! When he walks into a business office his name will sound out like a bell and all the doors will open to him! I’ve seen it, Ben, I’ve seen it a thousand times! You can’t feel it with your hand like timber, but it’s there!

BEN: Good-by, William.

WILLY: Ben, am I right? Don’t you think I’m right? I value your advice.

BEN: There’s a new continent at your doorstep, William. You could walk out rich. Rich! (*He is gone*.)

WILLY: We’ll do it here, Ben! You hear me? We’re gonna do it here!

*(Young Bernard rushes in. The gay music of the Boys is heard.)*

BERNARD: Oh, gee, I was afraid you left already!

WILLY: Why? What time is it?

BERNARD: It’s half-past one!

WILLY: Well, come on, everybody! Ebbets Field next stop!

Where’s the pennants? (*He rushes through the wall-line of the kitchen and out into the living room*.)

LINDA (*to Biff*): Did you pack fresh underwear?

BIFF (*who has been limbering up*): I want to go!

BERNARD: Biff, I’m carrying your helmet, ain’t I?

HAPPY: No, I’m carrying the helmet.

BERNARD: Oh, Biff, you promised me.

HAPPY: I’m carrying the helmet.

BERNARD: How am I going to get in the locker room?

LINDA: Let him carry the shoulder guards. (*She puts her coat and hat on in the kitchen*.)

BERNARD: Can I, Biff? ‘Cause I told everybody I’m going to be in the locker room.

HAPPY: In Ebbets Field it’s the clubhouse.

BERNARD: I meant the clubhouse. Biff!

HAPPY: Biff!

BIFF (*grandly, after a slight pause*): Let him carry the shoulder guards.

HAPPY (*as he gives Bernard the shoulder guards*): Stay close to us now.

*(Willy rushes in with the pennants.)*

WILLY (*handing them out*): Everybody wave when Biff comes out on the field. (*Happy and Bernard run off*.) You set now, boy?

*(The music has died away.)*

BIFF: Ready to go, Pop. Every muscle is ready.

WILLY (*at the edge of the apron*): You realize what this means?

BIFF: That’s right, Pop.

WILLY (*feeling Biffs muscles*): You’re comin’ home this afternoon captain of the All-Scholastic Championship Team of the City of New York.

BIFF: I got it, Pop. And remember, pal, when I take off my helmet, that touchdown is for you.

WILLY: Let’s go! (*He is starting out, with his arm around Biff, when Charley enters, as of old, in knickers*.) I got no room for you, Charley.

CHARLEY: Room? For what?

WILLY: In the car.

CHARLEY: You goin’ for a ride? I wanted to shoot some casino.

WILLY (*furiously*): Casino! (*Incredulously*.) Don’t you realize what today is?

LINDA: Oh, he knows, Willy. He’s just kidding you.

WILLY: That’s nothing to kid about!

CHARLEY: No, Linda, what’s goin on?

LINDA: He’s playing in Ebbets Field.

CHARLEY: Baseball in this weather?

WILLY: Don’t talk to him. Come on, come on! (*He is pushing them out*.)

CHARLEY: Wait a minute, didn’t you hear the news?

WILLY: What?

CHARLEY: Don’t you listen to the radio? Ebbets Field just blew up.

WILLY: You go to hell! (*Charley laughs. Pushing them out*.) Come on, come on! We’re late.

CHARLEY (*as they go*): Knock a homer, Biff, knock a homer!

WILLY (*the last to leave, turning to Charley*): I don’t think that was funny, Charley. This is the greatest day of his life.

CHARLEY: Willy, when are you going to grow up?

WILLY: Yeah, heh? When this game is over, Charley, you’ll be laughing out of the other side of your face. They’ll be calling him another Red Grange. Twenty-five thousand a year.

CHARLEY (*kidding*): Is that so?

WILLY: Yeah, that’s so.

CHARLEY: Well, then, I’m sorry, Willy. But tell me something.

WILLY: What?

CHARLEY: Who is Red Grange?

WILLY: Put up your hands. Goddam you, put up your hands!

*(Charley, chuckling, shakes his head and walks away, around the left comer of the stage. Willy follows him. The music rises to a mocking frenzy.)*

WILLY: Who the hell do you think you are, better than everybody else? You don’t know everything, you big, ignorant, stupid... Put up your hands!

*(Light rises, on the right side of the forestage, on a small table in the reception room of Charley’s office. Traffic sounds are heard. Bernard, now mature, sits whistling to himself. A pair of tennis rackets and an overnight bag are on the floor beside him.)*

WILLY (*offstage*): What are you walking away for? Don’t walk away! If you’re going to say something say it to my face! I know you laugh at me behind my back. You’ll laugh out of the other side of your goddam face after this game. Touchdown! Touchdown! Eighty thousand people! Touchdown! Right between the goal posts.

*(Bernard is a quiet, earnest, but self-assured young man. Willy’s voice is coming from right upstage now. Bernard lowers his feet off the table and listens. Jenny, his father’s secretary, enters.)*

JENNY (*distressed*): Say, Bernard, will you go out in the hall?

BERNARD: What is that noise? Who is it?

JENNY: Mr. Loman. He just got off the elevator.

BERNARD (*getting up*): Who’s he arguing with?

JENNY: Nobody. There’s nobody with him. I can’t deal with him any more, and your father gets all upset everytime he comes. I’ve got a lot of typing to do, and your father’s waiting to sign it. Will you see him?

WILLY (*entering*): Touchdown! Touch — (*He sees Jenny*.) Jenny, Jenny, good to see you. How’re ya? Workin’? Or still honest?

JENNY: Fine. How’ve you been feeling?

WILLY: Not much any more, Jenny. Ha, ha! (*He is surprised to see the rackets.*)

BERNARD: Hello, Uncle Willy.

WILLY (*almost shocked*): Bernard! Well, look who’s here! (*He comes quickly, guiltily, to Bernard and warmly shakes his hand*.)

BERNARD: How are you? Good to see you.

WILLY: What are you doing here?

BERNARD: Oh, just stopped by to see Pop. Get off my feet till my train leaves. I’m going to Washington in a few minutes.

WILLY: Is he in?

BERNARD: Yes, he’s in his office with the accountant. Sit down.

WILLY (*sitting down*): What’re you going to do in Washington?

BERNARD: Oh, just a case I’ve got there, Willy.

WILLY: That so? (*Indicating the rackets*.) You going to play tennis there?

BERNARD: I’m staying with a friend who’s got a court.

WILLY: Don’t say. His own tennis court. Must be fine people, I bet.

BERNARD: They are, very nice. Dad tells me Biffs in town.

WILLY (*with a big smile*): Yeah, Biffs in. Working on a very big deal, Bernard.

BERNARD: What’s Biff doing?

WILLY: Well, he’s been doing very big things in the West. But he decided to establish himself here. Very big. We’re having dinner. Did I hear your wife had a boy?

BERNARD: That’s right. Our second.

WILLY: Two boys! What do you know!

BERNARD: What kind of a deal has Biff got?

WILLY: Well, Bill Oliver — very big sporting-goods man — he wants Biff very badly. Called him in from the West. Long dis-

tance, carte blanche, special deliveries. Your friends have their

own private tennis court?

BERNARD: You still with the old firm, Willy?

WILLY (*after a pause*): I’m — I’m overjoyed to see how you made the grade, Bernard, overjoyed. It’s an encouraging thing to see a young man really — really... Looks very good for Biff — very... (*He breaks off, then*.) Bernard ... (*He is so full of emotion, he breaks off again*.)

BERNARD: What is it, Willy?

WILLY (*small and alone*): What — what’s the secret?

BERNARD: What secret?

WILLY: How — how did you? Why didn’t he ever catch on?

BERNARD: I wouldn’t know that, Willy.

WILLY (*confidentially, desperately*): You were his friend, his boyhood friend. There’s something I don’t understand about it. His life ended after that Ebbets Field game. From the age of seventeen nothing good ever happened to him.

BERNARD: He never trained himself for anything.

WILLY: But he did, he did. After high school he took so many correspondence courses. Radio mechanics; television; God knows what, and never made the slightest mark.

BERNARD (*taking off his glasses*): Willy, do you want to talk candidly?

WILLY (*rising, faces Bernard*): I regard you as a very brilliant man, Bernard. I value your advice.

BERNARD: Oh, the hell with the advice, Willy. I couldn’t advise you. There’s just one thing I’ve always wanted to ask you. When he was supposed to graduate, and the math teacher flunked him...

WILLY: Oh, that son-of-a-bitch ruined his life.

BERNARD: Yeah, but, Willy, all he had to do was go to summer school and make up that subject.

WILLY: That’s right, that’s right.

BERNARD: Did you tell him not to go to summer school?

WILLY: Me? I begged him to go. I ordered him to go!

BERNARD: Then why wouldn’t he go?

WILLY: Why? Why! Bernard, that question has been trailing me like a ghost for the last fifteen years. He flunked the subject, and laid down and died like a hammer hit him!

BERNARD: Take it easy, kid.

WILLY: Let me talk to you — I got nobody to talk to. Bernard, Bernard, was it my fault? Y’see? It keeps going around in my mind, maybe I did something to him. I got nothing to give him.

BERNARD: Don’t take it so hard.

WILLY: Why did he lay down? What is the story there? You were his friend!

BERNARD: Willy, I remember, it was June, and our grades came out. And he’d flunked math.

WILLY: That son-of-a-bitch!

BERNARD: No, it wasn’t right then. Biff just got very angry, I remember, and he was ready to enroll in summer school.

WILLY (*surprised*): He was?

BERNARD: He wasn’t beaten by it at all. But then, Willy, he disappeared from the block for almost a month. And I got the idea that he’d gone up to New England to see you. Did he have a talk with you then? (*Willy stares in silence*.)

BERNARD: Willy?

WILLY (*with a strong edge of resentment in his voice*): Yeah, he came to Boston. What about it?

BERNARD: Well, just that when he came back — I’ll never forget this, it always mystifies me. Because I’d thought so well of Biff, even though he’d always taken advantage of me. I loved him, Willy, y’know? And he came back after that month and took his sneakers — remember those sneakers with »University of Virginia« printed on them? He was so proud of those, wore them every day. And he took them down in the cellar, and burned them up in the furnace. We had a fist fight. It lasted at least half an hour. Just the two of us, punching each other down the cellar, and crying right through it. I’ve often thought of how strange it was that I knew he’d given up his life. What happened in Boston, Willy? (*Willy looks at him as at an intruder*.)

BERNARD: I just bring it up because you asked me.

WILLY (*angrily*): Nothing. What do you mean, »What happened?« What’s that got to do with anything?

BERNARD: Well, don’t get sore.

WILLY: What are you trying to do, blame it on me? If a boy lays down is that my fault?

BERNARD: Now, Willy, don’t get...

WILLY: Well, don’t — don’t talk to me that way! What does that mean, »What happened?«

*(Charley enters. He is in his vest, and he carries a bottle of bourbon.)*

CHARLEY: Hey; you’re going to miss that train. (*He waves the bottle*.)

BERNARD: Yeah, I’m going. (*He takes the bottle*.) Thanks, Pop. (*He picks up his rackets and bag*.) Good-by, Willy, and don’t worry about it. You know, »If at first you don’t succeed...«

WILLY: Yes, I believe in that.

BERNARD: But sometimes, Willy, it’s better for a man just to walk away.

WILLY: Walk away?

BERNARD: That’s right.

WILLY: But if you can’t walk away?

BERNARD (*after a slight pause*): I guess that’s when it’s tough. (*Extending his hand*.) Good-by, Willy.

WILLY (*shaking Bernard’s hand*): Good-by, boy.

CHARLEY (*an arm on Bernard’s shoulder*): How do you like this kid? Gonna argue a case in front of the Supreme Court.

BERNARD (*protesting*): Pop!

WILLY (*genuinely shocked, pained, and happy*): No! The Supreme Court!

BERNARD: I gotta run. ’By, Dad!

CHARLEY: Knock ‘em dead, Bernard!

*(Bernard goes off.)*

WILLY (*as Charley takes out his wallet*): The Supreme Court! And he didn’t even mention it!

CHARLEY (*counting out money on the desk*): He don’t have to — he’s gonna do it.

WILLY: And you never told him what to do, did you? You never took any interest in him.

CHARLEY: My salvation is that I never took any interest in anything. There’s some money — fifty dollars. I got an accountant inside.

WILLY: Charley, look... (*With difficulty*.) I got my insurance to pay. If you can manage it — I need a hundred and ten dollars.

*(Charley doesn’t reply for a moment; merely stops moving.)*

WILLY: I’d draw it from my bank but Linda would know, and I...

CHARLEY: Sit down, Willy.

WILLY (*moving toward the chair*): I’m keeping an account of everything, remember. I’ll pay every penny back. (*He sits*.)

CHARLEY: Now listen to me, Willy.

WILLY: I want you to know I appreciate...

CHARLEY (*sitting down on the table*): Willy, what’re you doin’?

What the hell is going on in your head?

WILLY: Why? I’m simply...

CHARLEY: I offered you a job. You make fifty dollars a week, and

I won’t send you on the road.

WILLY: I’ve got a job.

CHARLEY: Without pay? What kind of a job is a job without pay? (*He rises*.) Now, look, kid, enough is enough. I’m no genius but I know when I’m being insulted.

WILLY: Insulted!

CHARLEY: Why don’t you want to work for me?

WILLY: What’s the matter with you? I’ve got a job.

CHARLEY: Then what’re you walkin’ in here every week for?

WILLY (*getting up*): Well, if you don’t want me to walk in here...

CHARLEY: I’m offering you a job.

WILLY: I don’t want your goddam job!

CHARLEY: When the hell are you going to grow up?

WILLY (*furiously*): You big ignoramus, if you say that to me again I’ll rap you one! I don’t care how big you are! (*He’s ready to fight*.)

(*Pause*.)

CHARLEY (*kindly, going to him*): How much do you need, Willy?

WILLY: Charley, I’m strapped. I’m strapped. I don’t know what to do. I was just fired.

CHARLEY: Howard fired you?

WILLY: That snotnose. Imagine that? I named him. I named him Howard.

CHARLEY: Willy, when’re you gonna realize that them things don’t mean anything? You named him Howard, but you can’t sell that. The only thing you got in this world is what you can sell. And the funny thing is that you’re a salesman, and you don’t know that.

WILLY: I’ve always tried to think otherwise, I guess. I always felt that if a man was impressive, and well liked, that nothing...

CHARLEY: Why must everybody like you? Who liked J. P. Morgan? Was he impressive? In a Turkish bath he’d look like a butcher. But with his pockets on he was very well liked. Now listen, Willy, I know you don’t like me, and nobody can say I’m in love with you, but I’ll give you a job because — just for the hell of it, put it that way. Now what do you say?

WILLY: I — I just can’t work for you, Charley.

CHARLEY: What’re you, jealous of me?

WILLY: I can’t work for you, that’s all, don’t ask me why.

CHARLEY (*angered, takes out more bills*): You been jealous of me all your life, you damned fool! Here, pay your insurance. (*He puts the money in Willy’s hand*.)

WILLY: I’m keeping strict accounts.

CHARLEY: I’ve got some work to do. Take care of yourself. And pay your insurance.

WILLY (*moving to the right*): Funny, y’know? After all the highways, and the trains, and the appointments, and the years, you end up worth more dead than alive.

CHARLEY: Willy, nobody’s worth nothin’ dead. (*After a slight pause*.) Did you hear what I said? (*Willy stands still, dreaming*.)

CHARLEY: Willy!

WILLY: Apologize to Bernard for me when you see him. I didn’t mean to argue with him. He’s a fine boy. They’re all fine boys, and they’ll end up big — all of them. Someday they’ll all play tennis together. Wish me luck, Charley. He saw Bill Oliver today.

CHARLEY: Good luck.

WILLY (*on the verge of tears*): Charley, you’re the only friend I

got. Isn’t that a remarkable thing? (*He goes out*.)

CHARLEY: Jesus!

*(Charley stares after him a moment and follows. All light blacks out. Suddenly mucous music is heard, and a red glow rises behind the screen at right. Stanley, a young waiter, appears, carrying a table, followed by Happy, who is carrying two chairs.)*

STANLEY (*putting the table down*): That’s all right, Mr. Loman, I can handle it myself. (*He turns and takes the chairs from Happy and places them at the table*.)

HAPPY (*glancing around*): Oh, this is better.

STANLEY: Sure, in the front there you’re in the middle of all kinds of noise. Whenever you got a party, Mr. Loman, you just tell me and I’ll put you back here. Y’know, there’s a lotta people they don’t like it private, because when they go out they like to see a lotta action around them because they’re sick and tired to stay in the house by theirself. But I know you, you ain’t from Hackensack. You know what I mean?

HAPPY (*sitting down*): So how’s it coming, Stanley?

STANLEY: Ah, it’s a dog’s life. I only wish during the war they’d a took me in the Army. I coulda been dead by now.

HAPPY: My brother’s back, Stanley.

STANLEY: Oh, he come back, heh? From the Far West.

HAPPY: Yeah, big cattle man, my brother, so treat him right. And my father’s coming too.

STANLEY: Oh, your father too!

HAPPY: You got a couple of nice lobsters?

STANLEY: Hundred per cent, big.

HAPPY: I want them with the claws.

STANLEY: Don’t worry, I don’t give you no mice. (*Happy laughs*.)

How about some wine? It’ll put a head on the meal.

HAPPY: No. You remember, Stanley, that recipe I brought you from overseas? With the champagne in it?

STANLEY: Oh, yeah, sure. I still got it tacked up yet in the kitchen. But that’ll have to cost a buck apiece anyways.

HAPPY: That’s all right.

STANLEY: What’d you, hit a number or somethin’?

HAPPY: No, it’s a little celebration. My brother is — I think he pulled off a big deal today. I think we’re going into business together.

STANLEY: Great! That’s the best for you. Because a family business, you know what I mean? — that’s the best.

HAPPY: That’s what I think.

STANLEY: ‘Cause what’s the difference? Somebody steals? It’s in the family. Know what I mean? (*Sotto voce*). Like this bartender here. The boss is goin’ crazy what kinda leak he’s got in the cash register. You put it in but it don’t come out.

HAPPY (*raising his head*): Sh!

STANLEY: What?

HAPPY: You notice I wasn’t lookin’ right or left, was I?

STANLEY: No.

HAPPY: And my eyes are closed.

STANLEY: So what’s the...?

HAPPY: Strudel’s comin’.

STANLEY (*catching on, looks around*): Ah, no, there’s no — (*He breaks off as a furred, lavishly dressed girl enters and sits at the next table. Both follow her with their eyes*.)

STANLEY: Geez, how’d ya know?

HAPPY: I got radar or something. (*Staring directly at her profile*.) Oooooooo… Stanley.

STANLEY: I think that’s for you, Mr. Loman.

HAPPY: Look at that mouth. Oh, God. And the binoculars.

STANLEY: Geez, you got a life, Mr. Loman.

HAPPY: Wait on her.

STANLEY (*going to the Girl’s table*): Would you like a menu, ma’am?

GIRL: I’m expecting someone, but I’d like a...

HAPPY: Why don’t you bring her — excuse me, miss, do you mind? I sell champagne, and I’d like you to try my brand. Bring her a champagne, Stanley.

GIRL: That’s awfully nice of you.

HAPPY: Don’t mention it. It’s all company money. (*He laughs*.)

GIRL: That’s a charming product to be selling, isn’t it?

HAPPY: Oh, gets to be like everything else. Selling is selling, y’know.

GIRL: I suppose.

HAPPY: You don’t happen to sell, do you?

GIRL: No, I don’t sell.

HAPPY: Would you object to a compliment from a stranger? You ought to be on a magazine cover.

GIRL (*looking at him a little archly*): I have been.

*(Stanley comes in with a glass of champagne.)*

HAPPY: What’d I say before, Stanley? You see? She’s a cover girl.

STANLEY: Oh, I could see, I could see.

HAPPY (*to the Girl*): What magazine?

GIRL: Oh, a lot of them. (*She takes the drink*.) Thank you.

HAPPY: You know what they say in France, don’t you? »Champagne is the drink of the complexion« — Hya, Biff!

*(Biff has entered and sits with Happy.)*

BIFF: Hello, kid. Sorry I’m late.

HAPPY: I just got here. Uh, Miss... ?

GIRL: Forsythe.

HAPPY: Miss Forsythe, this is my brother.

BIFF: Is Dad here?

HAPPY: His name is Biff. You might’ve heard of him. Great football player.

GIRL: Really? What team?

HAPPY: Are you familiar with football?

GIRL: No, I’m afraid I’m not.

HAPPY: Biff is quarterback with the New York Giants.

GIRL: Well, that is nice, isn’t it? (*She drinks*.)

HAPPY: Good health.

GIRL: I’m happy to meet you.

HAPPY: That’s my name. Hap. It’s really Harold, but at West

Point they called me Happy.

GIRL (*now really impressed*): Oh, I see. How do you do? (*She turns her profile*.)

BIFF: Isn’t Dad coming?

HAPPY: You want her?

BIFF: Oh, I could never make that.

HAPPY: I remember the time that idea would never come into your head. Where’s the old confidence, Biff?

BIFF: I just saw Oliver...

HAPPY: Wait a minute. I’ve got to see that old confidence again.

Do you want her? She’s on call.

BIFF: Oh, no. (*He turns to look at the Girl*.)

HAPPY: I’m telling you. Watch this. (*Turning to the Girl*.) Honey?

(*She turns to him*). Are you busy?

GIRL: Well, I am... but I could make a phone call.

HAPPY: Do that, will you, honey? And see if you can get a friend.

We’ll be here for a while. Biff is one of the greatest football players in the country.

GIRL (*standing up*): Well, I’m certainly happy to meet you.

HAPPY: Come back soon.

GIRL: I’ll try.

HAPPY: Don’t try, honey, try hard.

*(The Girl exits. Stanley follows, shaking his head in bewildered admiration.)*

HAPPY: Isn’t that a shame now? A beautiful girl like that? That’s why I can’t get married. There’s not a good woman in a thousand. New York is loaded with them, kid!

BIFF: Hap, look...

HAPPY: I told you she was on call!

BIFF (*strangely unnerved*): Cut it out, will ya? I want to say something to you.

HAPPY: Did you see Oliver?

BIFF: I saw him all right. Now look, I want to tell Dad a couple of things and I want you to help me.

HAPPY: What? Is he going to back you?

BIFF: Are you crazy? You’re out of your goddam head, you know that?

HAPPY: Why? What happened?

BIFF (*breathlessly*): I did a terrible thing today, Hap. It’s been the strangest day I ever went through. I’m all numb, I swear.

HAPPY: You mean he wouldn’t see you?

BIFF: Well, I waited six hours for him, see? All day. Kept sending my name in. Even tried to date his secretary so she’d get me to him, but no soap.

HAPPY: Because you’re not showin’ the old confidence, Biff. He remembered you, didn’t he?

BIFF (*stopping Happy with a gesture*): Finally, about five o’clock, he comes out. Didn’t remember who I was or anything. I felt like such an idiot, Hap.

HAPPY: Did you tell him my Florida idea?

BIFF: He walked away. I saw him for one minute. I got so mad I could’ve torn the walls down! How the hell did I ever get the idea I was a salesman there? I even believed myself that I’d been a salesman for him! And then he gave me one look and — I realized what a ridiculous lie my whole life has been! We’ve been talking in a dream for fifteen years. I was a shipping clerk.

HAPPY: What’d you do?

BIFF (*with great tension and wonder*): Well, he left, see. And the secretary went out. I was all alone in the waiting room. I don’t know what came over me, Hap. The next thing I know I’m in his office — paneled walls, everything. I can’t explain it. I — Hap, I took his fountain pen.

HAPPY: Geez, did he catch you?

BIFF: I ran out. I ran down all eleven flights. I ran and ran and ran.

HAPPY: That was an awful dumb — what’d you do that for?

BIFF (*agonized*): I don’t know, I just — wanted to take something, I don’t know. You gotta help me, Hap, I’m gonna tell Pop.

HAPPY: You crazy? What for?

BIFF: Hap, he’s got to understand that I’m not the man somebody lends that kind of money to. He thinks I’ve been spiting him all these years and it’s eating him up.

HAPPY: That’s just it. You tell him something nice.

BIFF: I can’t.

HAPPY: Say you got a lunch date with Oliver tomorrow.

BIFF: So what do I do tomorrow?

HAPPY: You leave the house tomorrow and come back at night and say Oliver is thinking it over. And he thinks it over for a couple of weeks, and gradually it fades away and nobody’s the worse.

BIFF: But it’ll go on forever!

HAPPY: Dad is never so happy as when he’s looking forward to something!

*(Willy enters.)*

HAPPY: Hello, scout!

WILLY: Gee, I haven’t been here in years!

*(Stanley has followed Willy in and sets a chair for him. Stanley starts off but Happy stops him.)*

HAPPY: Stanley!

*(Stanley stands by, waiting for an order.)*

BIFF (*going to Willy with guilt, as to an invalid*): Sit down, Pop.

You want a drink?

WILLY: Sure, I don’t mind.

BIFF: Let’s get a load on.

WILLY: You look worried.

BIFF: N-no. (*To Stanley*.) Scotch all around. Make it doubles.

STANLEY: Doubles, right. (*He goes*.)

WILLY: You had a couple already, didn’t you?

BIFF: Just a couple, yeah.

WILLY: Well, what happened, boy? (*Nodding affirmatively, with a smile*.) Everything go all right?

BIFF *(takes a breath, then reaches out and grasps Willy’s hand*): Pal... (*He is smiling bravely, and Willy is smiling too.*) I had an experience today.

HAPPY: Terrific, Pop.

WILLY: That so? What happened?

BIFF (*high, slightly alcoholic, above the earth*): I’m going to tell you everything from first to last. It’s been a strange day. (*Silence. He looks around, composes himself as best he can, but his breath keeps breaking the rhythm of his voice*.) I had to wait quite a while for him, and...

WILLY: Oliver?

BIFF: Yeah, Oliver. All day, as a matter of cold fact. And a lot of instances — facts, Pop, facts about my life came back to me. Who was it, Pop? Who ever said I was a salesman with Oliver?

WILLY: Well, you were.

BIFF: No, Dad, I was a shipping clerk.

WILLY: But you were practically...

BIFF (*with determination*): Dad, I don’t know who said it first, but I was never a salesman for Bill Oliver.

WILLY: What’re you talking about?

BIFF: Let’s hold on to the facts tonight, Pop. We’re not going to get anywhere bullin’ around. I was a shipping clerk.

WILLY (*angrily*): All right, now listen to me...

BIFF: Why don’t you let me finish?

WILLY: I’m not interested in stories about the past or any crap of that kind because the woods are burning, boys, you understand? There’s a big blaze going on all around. I was fired today.

BIFF (*shocked*): How could you be?

WILLY: I was fired, and I’m looking for a little good news to tell your mother, because the woman has waited and the woman has suffered. The gist of it is that I haven’t got a story left in my head, Biff. So don’t give me a lecture about facts and aspects. I am not interested. Now what’ve you got to say to me? (*Stanley enters with three drinks. They wait until he leaves*.)

WILLY: Did you see Oliver?

BIFF: Jesus, Dad!

WILLY: You mean you didn’t go up there?

HAPPY: Sure he went up there.

BIFF: I did. I — saw him. How could they fire you?

WILLY (*on the edge of his chair*): What kind of a welcome did he give you?

BIFF: He won’t even let you work on commission?

WILLY: I’m out! (*Driving*.) So tell me, he gave you a warm welcome?

HAPPY: Sure, Pop, sure!

BIFF (*driven*): Well, it was kind of...

WILLY: I was wondering if he’d remember you. (*To Happy*.) Imagine, man doesn’t see him for ten, twelve years and gives him that kind of a welcome!

HAPPY: Damn right!

BIFF (*trying to return to the offensive*): Pop, look...

WILLY: You know why he remembered you, don’t you? Because you impressed him in those days.

BIFF: Let’s talk quietly and get this down to the facts, huh?

WILLY (*as though Biff had been interrupting*): Well, what happened? It’s great news, Biff. Did he take you into his office or’d you talk in the waiting room?

BIFF: Well, he came in, see, and...

WILLY (*with a big smile*): What’d he say? Betcha he threw his arm around you.

BIFF: Well, he kinda...

WILLY: He’s a fine man. (*To Happy*.) Very hard man to see, y’know.

HAPPY (*agreeing*): Oh, I know.

WILLY (*to Biff*): Is that where you had the drinks?

BIFF: Yeah, he gave me a couple of — no, no!

HAPPY (*cutting in*): He told him my Florida idea.

WILLY: Don’t interrupt. (*To Biff*) How’d he react to the Florida idea?

BIFF: Dad, will you give me a minute to explain?

WILLY: I’ve been waiting for you to explain since I sat down here! What happened? He took you into his office and what?

BIFF: Well — I talked. And — and he listened, see.

WILLY: Famous for the way he listens, y’know. What was his answer?

BIFF: His answer was — (*He breaks off, suddenly angry*.) Dad, you’re not letting me tell you what I want to tell you!

WILLY (*accusing, angered*): You didn’t see him, did you?

BIFF: I did see him!

WILLY: What’d you insult him or something? You insulted him, didn’t you?

BIFF: Listen, will you let me out of it, will you just let me out of it!

HAPPY: What the hell!

WILLY: Tell me what happened!

BIFF (*to Happy*): I can’t talk to him!

(*A single trumpet note jars the ear. The light of green leaves stains the house, which holds, the air of night and a dream. Young Bernard enters and knocks on the door of the house*.)

YOUNG BERNARD (*frantically*): Mrs. Loman, Mrs. Loman!

HAPPY: Tell him what happened!

BIFF (*to Happy*): Shut up and leave me alone!

WILLY: No, no! You had to go and flunk math!

BIFF: What math? What’re you talking about?

YOUNG BERNARD: Mrs. Loman, Mrs. Loman!

*(Linda appears in the house, as of old.)*

WILLY (*wildly*): Math, math, math!

BIFF: Take it easy, Pop!

YOUNG BERNARD: Mrs. Loman!

WILLY (*furiously*): If you hadn’t flunked you’d’ve been set by now!

BIFF: Now, look, I’m gonna tell you what happened, and you’re going to listen to me.

YOUNG BERNARD: Mrs. Loman!

BIFF: I waited six hours...

HAPPY: What the hell are you saying?

BIFF: I kept sending in my name but he wouldn’t see me. So finally he... (*He continues unheard as light fades low on the restaurant*.)

YOUNG BERNARD: Biff flunked math!

LINDA: No!

YOUNG BERNARD: Birnbaum flunked him! They won’t graduate him!

LINDA: But they have to. He’s gotta go to the university. Where is he? Biff! Biff!

YOUNG BERNARD: No, he left. He went to Grand Central.

LINDA: Grand — You mean he went to Boston!

YOUNG BERNARD: Is Uncle Willy in Boston?

LINDA: Oh, maybe Willy can talk to the teacher. Oh, the poor, poor boy!

*(Light on house area snaps out.)*

BIFF (*at the table, now audible, holding up a gold fountain pen*):... so I’m washed up with Oliver, you understand? Are you listening to me?

WILLY (*at a loss*): Yeah, sure. If you hadn’t flunked...

BIFF: Flunked what? What’re you talking about?

WILLY: Don’t blame everything on me! I didn’t flunk math — you did! What pen?

HAPPY: That was awful dumb, Biff, a pen like that is worth —

WILLY (*seeing the pen for the first time*): You took Oliver’s pen?

BIFF (*weakening*): Dad, I just explained it to you.

WILLY: You stole Bill Oliver’s fountain pen!

BIFF: I didn’t exactly steal it! That’s just what I’ve been explaining to you!

HAPPY: He had it in his hand and just then Oliver walked in, so he got nervous and stuck it in his pocket!

WILLY: My God, Biff!

BIFF: I never intended to do it, Dad!

OPERATOR’S VOICE: Standish Arms, good evening!

WILLY (*shouting*): I’m not in my room!

BIFF (*frightened*): Dad, what’s the matter? (*He and Happy stand up*.)

OPERATOR: Ringing Mr. Loman for you!

WILLY: I’m not there, stop it!

BIFF (*horrified, gets down on one knee before Willy*): Dad, I’ll make good, I’ll make good. (*Willy tries to get to his feet. Biff holds him down*.) Sit down now.

WILLY: No, you’re no good, you’re no good for anything.

BIFF: I am, Dad, I’ll find something else, you understand? Now don’t worry about anything. (*He holds up Willy’s face*.) Talk to me, Dad.

OPERATOR: Mr. Loman does not answer. Shall I page him?

WILLY (*attempting to stand, as though to rush and silence the Operator*): No, no, no!

HAPPY: He’ll strike something, Pop.

WILLY: No, no...

BIFF (*desperately, standing over Willy*): Pop, listen! Listen to me!

I’m telling you something good. Oliver talked to his partner about the Florida idea. You listening? He — he talked to his partner, and he came to me... I’m going to be all right, you hear? Dad, listen to me, he said it was just a question of the amount!

WILLY: Then you... got it?

HAPPY: He’s gonna be terrific, Pop!

WILLY (*trying to stand*): Then you got it, haven’t you? You got it! You got it!

BIFF (*agonized, holds Willy down*): No, no. Look, Pop. I’m supposed to have lunch with them tomorrow. I’m just telling you this so you’ll know that I can still make an impression, Pop. And I’ll make good somewhere, but I can’t go tomorrow, see?

WILLY: Why not? You simply...

BIFF: But the pen, Pop!

WILLY: You give it to him and tell him it was an oversight!

HAPPY: Sure, have lunch tomorrow!

BIFF: I can’t say that...

WILLY: You were doing a crossword puzzle and accidentally used his pen!

BIFF: Listen, kid, I took those balls years ago, now I walk in with his fountain pen? That clinches it, don’t you see? I can’t face him like that! I’ll try elsewhere.

PAGE’S VOICE: Paging Mr. Loman!

WILLY: Don’t you want to be anything?

BIFF: Pop, how can I go back?

WILLY: You don’t want to be anything, is that what’s behind it?

BIFF (*now angry at Willy for not crediting his sympathy*): Don’t take it that way! You think it was easy walking into that office after what I’d done to him? A team of horses couldn’t have dragged me back to Bill Oliver!

WILLY: Then why’d you go?

BIFF: Why did I go? Why did I go! Look at you! Look at what’s become of you!

*(Off left, The Woman laughs.)*

WILLY: Biff, you’re going to go to that lunch tomorrow, or...

BIFF: I can’t go. I’ve got no appointment!

HAPPY: Biff, for... !

WILLY: Are you spiting me?

BIFF: Don’t take it that way! Goddammit!

WILLY (*strikes Biff and falters away from the table*): You rotten little louse! Are you spiting me?

THE WOMAN: Someone’s at the door, Willy!

BIFF: I’m no good, can’t you see what I am?

HAPPY (*separating them*): Hey, you’re in a restaurant! Now cut it out, both of you! (*The girls enter*.) Hello, girls, sit down.

*(The Woman laughs, off left.)*

MISS FORSYTHE: I guess we might as well. This is Letta.

THE WOMAN: Willy, are you going to wake up?

BIFF (*ignoring Willy*): How’re ya, miss, sit down. What do you drink?

MISS FORSYTHE: Letta might not be able to stay long.

LETTA: I gotta get up very early tomorrow. I got jury duty. I’m so excited! Were you fellows ever on a jury?

BIFF: No, but I been in front of them! (*The girls laugh*.) This is my father.

LETTA: Isn’t he cute? Sit down with us, Pop.

HAPPY: Sit him down, Biff!

BIFF (*going to him*): Come on, slugger, drink us under the table.

To hell with it! Come on, sit down, pal.

*(On Biffs last insistence, Willy is about to sit.)*

THE WOMAN (*now urgently*): Willy are you going to answer the door!

*(The Woman’s call pulls Willy back. He starts right, befuddled.)*

BIFF: Hey, where are you going?

WILLY: Open the door.

BIFF: The door?

WILLY: The washroom... the door... where’s the door?

BIFF (*leading Willy to the left*): Just go straight down.

*(Willy moves left.)*

THE WOMAN: Willy, Willy, are you going to get up, get up, get up, get up?

*(Willy exits left.)*

LETTA: I think it’s sweet you bring your daddy along.

MISS FORSYTHE: Oh, he isn’t really your father!

BIFF (*at left, turning to her resentfully*): Miss Forsythe, you’ve just seen a prince walk by. A fine, troubled prince. A hardworking, unappreciated prince. A pal, you understand? A good companion. Always for his boys.

LETTA: That’s so sweet.

HAPPY: Well, girls, what’s the program? We’re wasting time.

Come on, Biff. Gather round. Where would you like to go?

BIFF: Why don’t you do something for him?

HAPPY: Me!

BIFF: Don’t you give a damn for him, Hap?

HAPPY: What’re you talking about? I’m the one who —

BIFF: I sense it, you don’t give a good goddam about him. (*He takes the rolled-up hose from his pocket and puts it on the table in front of Happy*.) Look what I found in the cellar, for Christ’s sake. How can you bear to let it go on?

HAPPY: Me? Who goes away? Who runs off and —

BIFF: Yeah, but he doesn’t mean anything to you. You could help him — I can’t! Don’t you understand what I’m talking about? He’s going to kill himself, don’t you know that?

HAPPY: Don’t I know it! Me!

BIFF: Hap, help him! Jesus... help him... Help me, help me, I can’t bear to look at his face! (*Ready to weep, he hurries out, up right*.)

HAPPY (*starting after him*): Where are you going?

MISS FORSYTHE: What’s he so mad about?

HAPPY: Come on, girls, we’ll catch up with him.

 MISS FORSYTHE (*as Happy pushes her out*): Say, I don’t like that temper of his!

HAPPY: He’s just a little overstrung, he’ll be all right!

WILLY (*off left, as The Woman laughs*): Don’t answer! Don’t answer!

LETTA: Don’t you want to tell your father...

HAPPY: No, that’s not my father. He’s just a guy. Come on, we’ll catch Biff, and, honey, we’re going to paint this town! Stanley, where’s the check! Hey, Stanley!

*(They exit. Stanley looks toward left.)*

STANLEY (*calling to Happy indignantly*): Mr. Loman! Mr. Loman!

*(Stanley picks up a chair and follows them off. Knocking is heard off left. The Woman enters, laughing. Willy follows her. She is in a black slip; he is buttoning his shirt. Raw, sensuous music accompanies their speech)*

WILLY: Will you stop laughing? Will you stop?

THE WOMAN: Aren’t you going to answer the door? He’ll wake the whole hotel.

WILLY: I’m not expecting anybody.

THE WOMAN: Whyn’t you have another drink, honey, and stop being so damn self-centered?

WILLY: I’m so lonely.

THE WOMAN: You know you ruined me, Willy? From now on, whenever you come to the office, I’ll see that you go right through to the buyers. No waiting at my desk anymore, Willy. You ruined me.

WILLY: That’s nice of you to say that.

THE WOMAN: Gee, you are self-centered! Why so sad? You are the saddest, self-centeredest soul I ever did see-saw. (*She laughs. He kisses her*.) Come on inside, drummer boy. It’s silly to be dressing in the middle of the night. (*As knocking is heard*.) Aren’t you going to answer the door?

WILLY: They’re knocking on the wrong door.

THE WOMAN: But I felt the knocking. And he heard us talking in here. Maybe the hotel’s on fire!

WILLY (*his terror rising*): It’s a mistake.

THE WOMAN: Then tell him to go away!

WILLY: There’s nobody there.

THE WOMAN: It’s getting on my nerves, Willy. There’s somebody standing out there and it’s getting on my nerves!

WILLY (*pushing her away from him*): All right, stay in the bathroom here, and don’t come out. I think there’s a law in Massachusetts about it, so don’t come out. It may be that new room clerk. He looked very mean. So don’t come out. It’s a mistake, there’s no fire.

*(The knocking is heard again. He takes a few steps away from her, and she vanishes into the wing. The light follows him, and now he is facing Young Biff, who carries a suitcase. Biff steps toward him. The music is gone.)*

BIFF: Why didn’t you answer?

WILLY: Biff! What are you doing in Boston?

BIFF: Why didn’t you answer? I’ve been knocking for five minutes, I called you on the phone...

WILLY: I just heard you. I was in the bathroom and had the door shut. Did anything happen home?

BIFF: Dad — I let you down.

WILLY: What do you mean?

BIFF: Dad...

WILLY: Biffo, what’s this about? (*Putting his arm around Biff*.) Come on, let’s go downstairs and get you a malted.

BIFF: Dad, I flunked math.

WILLY: Not for the term?

BIFF: The term. I haven’t got enough credits to graduate.

WILLY: You mean to say Bernard wouldn’t give you the answers?

BIFF: He did, he tried, but I only got a sixty-one.

WILLY: And they wouldn’t give you four points?

BIFF: Birnbaum refused absolutely. I begged him, Pop, but he won’t give me those points. You gotta talk to him before they close the school. Because if he saw the kind of man you are, and you just talked to him in your way, I’m sure he’d come through for me. The class came right before practice, see, and I didn’t go enough. Would you talk to him? He’d like you, Pop. You know the way you could talk.

WILLY: You’re on. We’ll drive right back.

BIFF: Oh, Dad, good work! I’m sure he’ll change it for you!

WILLY: Go downstairs and tell the clerk I’m checkin’ out. Go right down.

BIFF: Yes, sir! See, the reason he hates me, Pop — one day he was late for class so I got up at the blackboard and imitated him. I crossed my eyes and talked with a lithp.

WILLY (*laughing*): You did? The kids like it?

BIFF: They nearly died laughing!

WILLY: Yeah? What’d you do?

BIFF: The thquare root of thixthy twee is... (*Willy bursts out laughing; Biff joins him*.) And in the middle of it he walked in! (*Willy laughs and The Woman joins in offstage*.)

WILLY (*without hesitation*): Hurry downstairs and...

BIFF: Somebody in there?

WILLY: No, that was next door. (*The Woman laughs offstage*.)

BIFF: Somebody got in your bathroom!

WILLY: No, it’s the next room, there’s a party —

THE WOMAN (*enters, laughing; she lisps this*): Can I come in? There’s something in the bathtub, Willy, and it’s moving! (*Willy looks at Biff, who is staring open-mouthed and horrified at The Woman.*)

WILLY: Ah — you better go back to your room. They must be finished painting by now. They’re painting her room so I let her take a shower here. Go back, go back... (*He pushes her.*)

THE WOMAN (*resisting*): But I’ve got to get dressed, Willy, I can’t —

WILLY: Get out of here! Go back, go back... (*Suddenly striding for the ordinary*.) This is Miss Francis, Biff, she’s a buyer. They’re painting her room. Go back, Miss Francis, go back...

THE WOMAN: But my clothes, I can’t go out naked in the hall!

WILLY (*pushing her offstage*): Get outa here! Go back, go back!

*(Biff slowly sits down on his suitcase as the argument continues offstage.)*

THE WOMAN: Where’s my stockings? You promised me stockings, Willy!

WILLY: I have no stockings here!

THE WOMAN: You had two boxes of size nine sheers for me, and I want them!

WILLY: Here, for God’s sake, will you get outa here!

THE WOMAN (*enters holding a box of stockings*): I just hope there’s nobody in the hall. That’s all I hope. (*To Biff*.) Are you football or baseball?

BIFF: Football.

THE WOMAN (*angry, humiliated*): That’s me too. G’night. (*She snatches her clothes from Willy, and walks out*.)

WILLY (*after a pause*): Well, better get going. I want to get to the school first thing in the morning. Get my suits out of the closet. I’ll get my valise. (*Biff doesn’t move*.) What’s the matter! (*Biff remains motionless, tears falling*.) She’s a buyer. Buys for J. H. Simmons. She lives down the hall — they’re painting. You don’t imagine — (*He breaks off. After a pause.*) Now listen, pal, she’s just a buyer. She sees merchandise in her room and they have to keep it looking just so... (*Pause. Assuming command*.) All right, get my suits. (*Biff doesn’t move*.) Now stop crying and do as I say. I gave you an order. Biff, I gave you an order! Is that what you do when I give you an order? How dare you cry! (*Putting his arm around Biff*.) Now look, Biff, when you grow up you’ll understand about these things. You mustn’t — you mustn’t overemphasize a thing like this. I’ll see Birnbaum first thing in the morning.

BIFF: Never mind.

WILLY (*getting down beside Biff*): Never mind! He’s going to give you those points. I’ll see to it.

BIFF: He wouldn’t listen to you.

WILLY: He certainly will listen to me. You need those points for the U. of Virginia.

BIFF: I’m not going there.

WILLY: Heh? If I can’t get him to change that mark you’ll make it up in summer school. You’ve got all summer to —

BIFF (*his weeping breaking from him*): Dad...

WILLY (*infected by it*): Oh, my boy...

BIFF: Dad...

WILLY: She’s nothing to me, Biff. I was lonely, I was terrible lonely.

BIFF: You — you gave her Mama’s stockings! (*His tears break through and he rises to go*.)

WILLY (*grabbing for Biff*): I gave you an order!

BIFF: Don’t touch me, you — liar!

WILLY: Apologize for that!

BIFF: You fake! You phony little fake! You fake! (*Overcome, he turns quickly and weeping fully goes out with his suitcase. Willy is left on the floor on his knees*.)

WILLY: I gave you an order! Biff, come back here or I’ll beat you!

Come back here! I’ll whip you!

*(Stanley comes quickly in from the right and stands in front of*

*Willy.)*

WILLY (*shouts at Stanley*): I gave you an order...

STANLEY: Hey, let’s pick it up, pick it up, Mr. Loman. (*He helps Willy to his feet*.) Your boys left with the chippies. They said they’ll see you home.

*(A second waiter watches some distance away.)*

WILLY: But we were supposed to have dinner together.

*(Music is heard, Willy’s theme.)*

STANLEY: Can you make it?

WILLY: I’ll — sure, I can make it. (*Suddenly concerned about his clothes*.) Do I — I look all right?

STANLEY: Sure, you look all right. (*He flicks a speck off Willy’s lapel*.)

WILLY: Here — here’s a dollar.

STANLEY: Oh, your son paid me. It’s all right.

WILLY (*putting it in Stanley’s hand*): No, take it. You’re a good boy.

STANLEY: Oh, no, you don’t have to...

WILLY: Here — here’s some more, I don’t need it any more. (*After a slight pause*.) Tell me — is there a seed store in the neighborhood?

STANLEY: Seeds? You mean like to plant?

*(As Willy turns, Stanley slips the money back into his jacket pocket.)*

WILLY: Yes. Carrots, peas...

STANLEY: Well, there’s hardware stores on Sixth Avenue, but it may be too late now.

WILLY (*anxiously*): Oh, I’d better hurry. I’ve got to get some seeds. (*He starts off to the right.*) I’ve got to get some seeds, right away. Nothing’s planted. I don’t have a thing in the ground.

*(Willy hurries out as the light goes down. Stanley moves over to the right after him, watches him off. The other waiter has been staring at Willy.)*

STANLEY (*to the waiter*): Well, whatta you looking at?

*(The waiter picks up the chairs and moves off right. Stanley takes the table and follows him. The light fades on this area. There is a long pause, the sound of the flute corning over. The light gradually rises on the kitchen, which is empty. Happy appears at the door of the house, followed by Biff. Happy is carrying a large bunch of long-stemmed roses. He enters the kitchen, looks around for Linda. Not seeing her, he turns to Biff, who is just outside the house door, and makes a gesture with his hands, indicating »Not here, I guess.« He looks into the living room and freezes. Inside, Linda, unseen is seated, Willy’s coat on her lap. She rises ominously and quietly and moves toward Happy, who backs up into the kitchen, afraid.)*

HAPPY: Hey, what’re you doing up? (*Linda says nothing but moves toward him implacably*.) Where’s Pop? *(He keeps backing to the right and now Linda is in full view in the doorway to the living room*.) Is he sleeping?

LINDA: Where were you?

HAPPY *(trying to laugh it off*): We met two girls, Mom, very fine types. Here, we brought you some flowers. (*Offering them to her*.) Put them in your room, Ma.

*(She knocks them to the floor at Biff’s feet. He has now come inside and closed the door behind him. She stares at Biff, silent.)*

HAPPY: Now what’d you do that for? Mom, I want you to have some flowers...

LINDA (*cutting Happy off, violently to Biff*): Don’t you care whether he lives or dies?

HAPPY (*going to the stairs*): Come upstairs, Biff.

BIFF (*with a flare of disgust, to Happy*): Go away from me! (*To Linda*.) What do you mean, lives or dies? Nobody’s dying around here, pal.

LINDA: Get out of my sight! Get out of here!

BIFF: I wanna see the boss.

LINDA: You’re not going near him!

BIFF: Where is he? (*He moves into the living room and Linda follows*.)

LINDA (*shouting after Biff*): You invite him for dinner. He looks forward to it all day — (*Biff appears in his parent’s bedroom, looks around, and exits*) — and then you desert him there. There’s no stranger you’d do that to!

HAPPY: Why? He had a swell time with us. Listen, when I — (*Linda comes back into the kitchen*) — desert him I hope I don’t outlive the day!

LINDA: Get out of here!

HAPPY: Now look, Mom...

LINDA: Did you have to go to women tonight? You and your lousy rotten whores!

*(Biff re-enters the kitchen.)*

HAPPY: Mom, all we did was follow Biff around trying to cheer him up! (*To Biff*.) Boy, what a night you gave me!

LINDA: Get out of here, both of you, and don’t come back! I don’t want you tormenting him any more. Go on now, get your things together! (*To Biff*.) You can sleep in his apartment. (*She starts to pick up the flowers and stops herself*.) Pick up this stuff, I’m not your maid any more. Pick it up, you bum, you!

*(Happy turns his back to her in refusal. Biff slowly moves over and gets down on his knees, picking up the flowers.)*

LINDA: You’re a pair of animals! Not one, not another living soul would have had the cruelty to walk out on the man in a restaurant!

BIFF (*not looking at her*): Is that what he said?

LINDA: He didn’t have to say anything. He was so humiliated he nearly limped when he came in.

HAPPY: But, Mom, he had a great time with us...

BIFF (*cutting him off violently*): Shut up!

*(Without another word, Happy goes upstairs.)*

LINDA: You! You didn’t even go in to see if he was all right!

BIFF (*still on the floor in front of Linda, the flowers in his hand; with self-loathing*): No. Didn’t. Didn’t do a damned thing. How do you like that, heh? Left him babbling in a toilet.

LINDA: You louse. You...

BIFF: Now you hit it on the nose! (*He gets up, throws the flowers in the wastebasket*.) The scum of the earth, and you’re looking at him!

LINDA: Get out of here!

BIFF: I gotta talk to the boss, Mom. Where is he?

LINDA: You’re not going near him. Get out of this house!

BIFF (*with absolute assurance, determination*): No. We’re gonna have an abrupt conversation, him and me.

LINDA: You’re not talking to him.

*(Hammering is heard from outside the house, off right. Biff turns toward the noise.)*

LINDA (*suddenly pleading*): Will you please leave him alone?

BIFF: What’s he doing out there?

LINDA: He’s planting the garden!

BIFF (*quietly*): Now? Oh, my God!

*(Biff moves outside, Linda following. The light dies down on them and comes up on the center of the apron as Willy walks into it. He is carrying a flashlight, a hoe, and a handful of seed packets. He raps the top of the hoe sharply to fix it firmly, and then moves to the left, measuring off the distance with his foot. He holds the flashlight to look at the seed packets, reading off the instructions. He is in the blue of night.)*

WILLY: Carrots... quarter-inch apart. Rows... one-foot rows. (*He measures it off*.) One foot. (*He puts down a package and measures off*.) Beets. (*He puts down another package and measures again*.) Lettuce. (*He reads the package, puts it down*.) One foot

— (*He breaks off as Ben appears at the right and moves slowly down to him*.) What a proposition, ts, ts. Terrific, terrific. ‘Cause she’s suffered, Ben, the woman has suffered. You understand me? A man can’t go out the way, he came in, Ben, a man has got to add up to something. You can’t, you can’t — (*Ben moves toward him as though to interrupt*.) You gotta consider, now. Don’t answer so quick. Remember, it’s a guaranteed twenty-thousand-dollar proposition. Now look, Ben, I want you to go through the ins and outs of this thing with me. I’ve got nobody to talk to, Ben, and the woman has suffered, you hear me?

BEN (*standing still, considering*): What’s the proposition?

WILLY: It’s twenty thousand dollars on the barrelhead. Guaranteed, gilt-edged, you understand?

BEN: You don’t want to make a fool of yourself. They might not honor the policy.

WILLY: How can they dare refuse? Didn’t I work like a coolie to meet every premium on the nose? And now they don’t pay off? Impossible!

BEN: It’s called a cowardly thing, William.

WILLY: Why? Does it take more guts to stand here the rest of my life ringing up a zero?

BEN (*yielding*): That’s a point, William. (*He moves, thinking, turns*.) And twenty thousand — that is something one can feel with the hand, it is there.

WILLY (*now assured, with rising power*): Oh, Ben, that’s the whole beauty of it! I see it like a diamond, shining in the dark, hard and rough, that I can pick up and touch in my hand. Not like — like an appointment! This would not be another damned-fool appointment, Ben, and it changes all the aspects. Because he thinks I’m nothing, see, and so he spites me. But the funeral... (*Straightening up*.) Ben, that funeral will be massive! They’ll come from Maine, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire! All the oldtimers with the strange license plates — that boy will be thunderstruck, Ben, because he never realized — I am known! Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey — I am known, Ben, and he’ll see it with his eyes once and for all. He’ll see what I am, Ben! He’s in for a shock, that boy!

BEN (*coming down to the edge of the garden*): He’ll call you a coward.

WILLY (*suddenly fearful*): No, that would be terrible.

BEN: Yes. And a damned fool.

WILLY: No, no, he mustn’t, I won’t have that! (*He is broken and desperate*.)

BEN: He’ll hate you, William.

*(The gay music of the Boys is heard.)*

WILLY: Oh, Ben, how do we get back to all the great times? Used to be so full of light, and comradeship, the sleigh-riding in winter, and the ruddiness on his cheeks. And always some kind of good news coming up, always something nice coming up ahead. And never even let me carry the valises in the house, and simonizing, simonizing that little red car! Why, why can’t I give him something and not have him hate me?

BEN: Let me think about it. (*He glances at his watch*.) I still have a little time. Remarkable proposition, but you’ve got to be sure you’re not making a fool of yourself. (*Ben drifts off upstage and goes out of sight. Biff comes down from the left*.)

WILLY *(suddenly conscious of Biff, turns and looks up at him, then begins picking up the packages of seeds in confusion*.): Where the hell is that seed? (*Indignantly*.) You can’t see nothing out here! They boxed in the whole goddam neighborhood!

BIFF: There are people all around here. Don’t you realize that?

WILLY: I’m busy. Don’t bother me.

BIFF (*taking the hoe from Willy*): I’m saying good-by to you, Pop. (*Willy looks at him, silent, unable to move.*) I’m not coming back any more.

WILLY: You’re not going to see Oliver tomorrow?

BIFF: I’ve got no appointment, Dad.

WILLY: He put his arm around you, and you’ve got no appointment?

BIFF: Pop, get this now, will you? Everytime I’ve left it’s been a fight that sent me out of here. Today I realized something about myself and I tried to explain it to you and I — I think I’m just not smart enough to make any sense out of it for you. To hell with whose fault it is or anything like that. (*He takes Willy’s arm*.) Let’s just wrap it up, heh? Come on in, we’ll tell Mom. (*He gently tries to pull Willy to left*.)

WILLY *(frozen, immobile, with guilt in his voice*): No, I don’t want to see her.

BIFF: Come on! (*He pulls again, and Willy tries to pull away*.)

WILLY *(highly nervous*): No, no, I don’t want to see her.

BIFF *(tries to look into Willy’s face, as if to find the answer there*): Why don’t you want to see her?

WILLY (*more harshly now*): Don’t bother me, will you?

BIFF: What do you mean, you don’t want to see her? You don’t want them calling you yellow, do you? This isn’t your fault; it’s me, I’m a bum. Now come inside! (*Willy strains to get away*.) Did you hear what I said to you?

*(Willy pulls away and quickly goes by himself into the house. Biff follows.)*

LINDA (*to Willy*): Did you plant, dear?

BIFF (*at the door, to Linda*). All right, we had it out. I’m going and I’m not writing any more.

LINDA (*going to Willy in the kitchen*): I think that’s the best way, dear. ‘Cause there’s no use drawing it out, you’ll just never get along.

*(Willy doesn’t respond.)*

BIFF: People ask where I am and what I’m doing, you don’t know, and you don’t care. That way it’ll be off your mind and you can start brightening up again. All right? That clears it, doesn’t it? (*Willy is silent, and Biff goes to him*.) You gonna wish me luck, scout? (*He extends his hand*.) What do you say?

LINDA: Shake his hand, Willy.

WILLY (*turning to her, seething with hurt*): There’s no necessity to mention the pen at all, y’know.

BIFF (*gently*): I’ve got no appointment, Dad.

WILLY (*erupting fiercely*). He put his arm around... ?

BIFF: Dad, you’re never going to see what I am, so what’s the use of arguing? If I strike oil I’ll send you a check. Meantime forget I’m alive.

WILLY (*to Linda*): Spite, see?

BIFF: Shake hands, Dad.

WILLY: Not my hand.

BIFF: I was hoping not to go this way.

WILLY: Well, this is the way you’re going. Good-by.

*(Biff looks at him a moment, then turns sharply and goes to the stairs.)*

WILLY *(stops him with*): May you rot in hell if you leave this house!

BIFF (*turning*): Exactly what is it that you want from me?

WILLY: I want you to know, on the train, in the mountains, in the valleys, wherever you go, that you cut down your life for spite!

BIFF: No, no.

WILLY: Spite, spite, is the word of your undoing! And when you’re down and out, remember what did it. When you’re rotting somewhere beside the railroad tracks, remember, and don’t you dare blame it on me!

BIFF: I’m not blaming it on you!

WILLY: I won’t take the rap for this, you hear?

*(Happy comes down the stairs and stands on the bottom step, watching.)*

BIFF: That’s just what I’m telling you!

WILLY (*sinking into a chair at a table, with full accusation*): You’re trying to put a knife in me — don’t think I don’t know what you’re doing!

BIFF: All right, phony! Then let’s lay it on the line. (*He whips the rubber tube out of his pocket and puts it on the table*.)

HAPPY: You crazy...

LINDA: Biff! (*She moves to grab the hose, but Biff holds it down with his hand*.)

BIFF: Leave it there! Don’t move it!

WILLY (*not looking at it*): What is that?

BIFF: You know goddam well what that is.

WILLY (*caged, wanting to escape*): I never saw that.

BIFF: You saw it. The mice didn’t bring it into the cellar! What is this supposed to do, make a hero out of you? This supposed to make me sorry for you?

WILLY: Never heard of it.

BIFF: There’ll be no pity for you, you hear it? No pity!

WILLY (*to Linda*): You hear the spite!

BIFF: No, you’re going to hear the truth — what you are and what I am!

LINDA: Stop it!

WILLY: Spite!

HAPPY (*coming down toward Biff*): You cut it now!

BIFF (*to Happy*): The man don’t know who we are! The man is gonna know! (*To Willy*) We never told the truth for ten minutes in this house!

HAPPY: We always told the truth!

BIFF (*turning on him*): You big blow, are you the assistant buyer? You’re one of the two assistants to the assistant, aren’t you?

HAPPY: Well, I’m practically —

BIFF: You’re practically full of it! We all are! And I’m through with it. (*To Willy*.) Now hear this, Willy, this is me.

WILLY: I know you!

BIFF: You know why I had no address for three months? I stole a suit in Kansas City and I was in jail. (*To Linda, who is sobbing*.) Stop crying. I’m through with it. (*Linda turns away from them, her hands covering her face.*)

WILLY: I suppose that’s my fault!

BIFF: I stole myself out of every good job since high school!

WILLY: And whose fault is that?

BIFF: And I never got anywhere because you blew me so full of hot air I could never stand taking orders from anybody! That’s whose fault it is!

WILLY: I hear that!

LINDA: Don’t, Biff!

BIFF: It’s goddam time you heard that! I had to be boss big shot in two weeks, and I’m through with it.

WILLY: Then hang yourself! For spite, hang yourself!

BIFF: No! Nobody’s hanging himself, Willy! I ran down eleven flights with a pen in my hand today. And suddenly I stopped, you hear me? And in the middle of that office building, do you hear this? I stopped in the middle of that building and I saw — the sky. I saw the things that I love in this world. The work and the food and time to sit and smoke. And I looked at the pen and said to myself, what the hell am I grabbing this for? Why am I trying to become what I don’t want to be? What am I doing in an office, making a contemptuous, begging fool of myself, when all I want is out there, waiting for me the minute I say I know who I am! Why can’t I say that, Willy? (*He tries to make Willy face him, but Willy pulls away and moves to the left*.)

WILLY (*with hatred, threateningly*): The door of your life is wide open!

BIFF: Pop! I’m a dime a dozen, and so are you!

WILLY (*turning on him now in an uncontrolled outburst*): I am not a dime a dozen! I am Willy Loman, and you are Biff Loman!

*(Biff starts for Willy, but is blocked by Happy. In his fury, Biff seems on the verge of attacking his father.)*

BIFF: I am not a leader of men, Willy, and neither are you. You were never anything but a hard-working drummer who landed in the ash can like all the rest of them! I’m one dollar an hour, Willy I tried seven states and couldn’t raise it. A buck an hour! Do you gather my meaning? I’m not bringing home any prizes any more, and you’re going to stop waiting for me to bring them home!

WILLY (*directly to Biff*): You vengeful, spiteful mut!

*(Biff breaks from Happy. Willy, in fright, starts up the stairs. Biff grabs him.)*

BIFF (*at the peak of his fury*): Pop, I’m nothing! I’m nothing, Pop.

Can’t you understand that? There’s no spite in it any more. I’m just what I am, that’s all.

*(Biffs fury has spent itself, and he breaks down, sobbing, holding on to Willy, who dumbly fumbles for Biff’s face.)*

WILLY (*astonished*): What’re you doing? What’re you doing? (*To Linda*.) Why is he crying?

BIFF (*crying, broken*): Will you let me go, for Christ’s sake? Will you take that phony dream and burn it before something happens? (*Struggling to contain himself, he pulls away and moves to the stairs*.) I’ll go in the morning. Put him — put him to bed. (*Exhausted, Biff moves up the stairs to his room*.)

WILLY (*after a long pause, astonished, elevated*): Isn’t that — isn’t that remarkable? Biff — he likes me!

LINDA: He loves you, Willy!

HAPPY (*deeply moved*): Always did, Pop.

WILLY: Oh, Biff! (*Staring wildly*.) He cried! Cried to me. (*He is choking with his love, and now cries out his promise.*) That boy — that boy is going to be magnificent! (*Ben appears in the light just outside the kitchen.*)

BEN: Yes, outstanding, with twenty thousand behind him.

LINDA (*sensing the racing of his mind, fearfully, carefully*): Now come to bed, Willy. It’s all settled now.

WILLY (*finding it difficult not to rush out of the house*): Yes, we’ll sleep. Come on. Go to sleep, Hap.

BEN: And it does take a great kind of a man to crack the jungle. (*In accents of dread, Ben’s idyllic music starts up.*)

HAPPY (*his arm around Linda*): I’m getting married, Pop, don’t forget it. I’m changing everything. I’m gonna run that department before the year is up. You’ll see, Mom. (*He kisses her.*)

BEN: The jungle is dark but full of diamonds, Willy.

*(Willy turns, moves, listening to Ben.)*

LINDA: Be good. You’re both good boys, just act that way, that’s all.

HAPPY: ‘Night, Pop. (*He goes upstairs*.)

LINDA (*to Willy*): Come, dear.

BEN (*with greater force*): One must go in to fetch a diamond out.

WILLY (*to Linda, as he moves slowly along the edge of kitchen, toward the door*): I just want to get settled down, Linda. Let me sit alone for a little.

LINDA (*almost uttering her fear*): I want you upstairs.

WILLY (*taking her in his arms*): In a few minutes, Linda. I couldn’t sleep right now. Go on, you look awful tired. (*He kisses her*.)

BEN: Not like an appointment at all. A diamond is rough and hard to the touch.

WILLY: Go on now. I’ll be right up.

LINDA: I think this is the only way, Willy.

WILLY: Sure, it’s the best thing.

BEN: Best thing!

WILLY: The only way. Everything is gonna be — go on, kid, get to bed. You look so tired.

LINDA: Come right up.

WILLY: Two minutes.

*(Linda goes into the living room, then reappears in her bedroom. Willy moves just outside the kitchen door.)*

WILLY: Loves me. (*Wonderingly*.) Always loved me. Isn’t that a remarkable thing? Ben, he’ll worship me for it!

BEN (*with promise*): It’s dark there, but full of diamonds.

WILLY: Can you imagine that magnificence with twenty thousand dollars in his pocket?

LINDA (*calling from her room*): Willy! Come up!

WILLY (*calling into the kitchen*): Yes! Yes. Coming! It’s very smart, you realize that, don’t you, sweetheart? Even Ben sees it. I gotta go, baby. ‘By! ‘By! (*Going over to Ben, almost dancing*.) Imagine? When the mail comes he’ll be ahead of Bernard again!

BEN: A perfect proposition all around.

WILLY: Did you see how he cried to me? Oh, if I could kiss him, Ben!

BEN: Time, William, time!

WILLY: Oh, Ben, I always knew one way or another we were gonna make it, Biff and I!

BEN (*looking at his watch*): The boat. We’ll be late. (*He moves slowly off into the darkness.*)

WILLY (*elegiacally, turning to the house*): Now when you kick off, boy, I want a seventy-yard boot, and get right down the field under the ball, and when you hit, hit low and hit hard, because it’s important, boy. (*He swings around and faces the audience*.) There’s all kinds of important people in the stands, and the first thing you know... (*Suddenly realizing he is alone*.) Ben! Ben, where do I... ? (*He makes a sudden movement of search*.) Ben, how do I... ?

LINDA (*calling*): Willy, you coming up?

WILLY (*uttering a gasp of fear, whirling about as if to quiet her*): Sh! (*He turns around as if to find his way; sounds, faces, voices, seem to be swarming in upon him and he flicks at them, crying.*) Sh! Sh! (*Suddenly music, faint and high, stops him. It rises in intensity, almost to an unbearable scream. He goes up and down on his toes, and rushes off around the house.*) Shhh!

LINDA: Willy?

*(There is no answer. Linda waits. Biff gets up off his bed. He is still in his clothes. Happy sits up. Biff stands listening.)*

LINDA (*with real fear*): Willy, answer me! Willy!

*(There is the sound of a car starting and moving away at full speed.)*

LINDA: No!

BIFF (*rushing down the stairs*): Pop!

*(As the car speeds off, the music crashes down in a frenzy of sound, which becomes the soft pulsation of a single cello string. Biff slowly returns to his bedroom. He and Happy gravely don their jackets. Linda slowly walks out of her room. The music has developed into a dead march. The leaves of day are appearing over everything. Charley and Bernard, somberly dressed, appear and knock on the kitchen door. Biff and Happy slowly descend the stairs to the kitchen as Charley and Bernard enter. All stop a moment when Linda, in clothes of mourning, bearing a little bunch of roses, comes through the draped doorway into the kitchen. She goes to Charley and takes his arm. Now all move toward the audience, through the wall-line of the kitchen. At the limit of the apron, Linda lays down the flowers, kneels, and sits back on her heels. All stare down at the grave.)*

REQUIEM

CHARLEY: It’s getting dark, Linda.

*(Linda doesn’t react. She stares at the grave.)*

BIFF: How about it, Mom? Better get some rest, heh? They’ll be closing the gate soon.

*(Linda makes no move. Pause.)*

HAPPY (*deeply angered*): He had no right to do that. There was no necessity for it. We would’ve helped him.

CHARLEY (*grunting*): Hmmm.

BIFF: Come along, Mom.

LINDA: Why didn’t anybody come?

CHARLEY: It was a very nice funeral.

LINDA: But where are all the people he knew? Maybe they blame him.

CHARLEY: Naa. It’s a rough world, Linda. They wouldn’t blame him.

LINDA: I can’t understand it. At this time especially. First time in thirty-five years we were just about free and clear. He only needed a little salary. He was even finished with the dentist.

CHARLEY: No man only needs a little salary.

LINDA: I can’t understand it.

BIFF: There were a lot of nice days. When he’d come home from a trip; or on Sundays, making the stoop; finishing the cellar; putting on the new porch; when he built the extra bathroom; and put up the garage. You know something, Charley, there’s more of him in that front stoop than in all the sales he ever made.

CHARLEY: Yeah. He was a happy man with a batch of cement.

LINDA: He was so wonderful with his hands.

BIFF: He had the wrong dreams. All, all, wrong.

HAPPY (*almost ready to fight Biff*): Don’t say that!

BIFF: He never knew who he was.

CHARLEY (*stopping Happy’s movement and reply. To Biff*): Nobody dast blame this man. You don’t understand: Willy was a salesman. And for a salesman, there is no rock bottom to the life. He don’t put a bolt to a nut, he don’t tell you the law or give you medicine. He’s man way out there in the blue, riding on a smile and a Shoeshine. And when they start not smiling back — that’s an earthquake. And then you get yourself a couple of spots on your hat, and you’re finished. Nobody dast blame this man. A salesman is got to dream, boy. It comes with the territory.

BIFF: Charley, the man didn’t know who he was.

HAPPY (*infuriated*): Don’t say that!

BIFF: Why don’t you come with me, Happy?

HAPPY: I’m not licked that easily. I’m staying right in this city, and I’m gonna beat this racket! (*He looks at Biff, his chin set*.) The Loman Brothers!

BIFF: I know who I am, kid.

HAPPY: All right, boy. I’m gonna show you and everybody else that Willy Loman did not die in vain. He had a good dream. It’s the only dream you can have — to come out number-one man. He fought it out here, and this is where I’m gonna win it for him.

BIFF (*with a hopeless glance at Happy, bends toward his mother*): Let’s go, Mom.

LINDA: I’ll be with you in a minute. Go on, Charley. (*He hesitates*.) I want to, just for a minute. I never had a chance to say good-by.

*(Charley moves away, followed by Happy. Biff remains a slight distance up and left of Linda. She sits there, summoning herself. The flute begins, not far away, playing behind her speech.)*

LINDA: Forgive me, dear. I can’t cry. I don’t know what it is, I can’t cry. I don’t understand it. Why did you ever do that? Help me Willy, I can’t cry. It seems to me that you’re just on another trip. I keep expecting you. Willy, dear, I can’t cry. Why did you do it? I search and search and I search, and I can’t understand it, Willy. I made the last payment on the house today. Today, dear. And there’ll be nobody home. (*A sob rises in her throat*.) We’re free and clear. (*Sobbing more fully, released*.) We’re free. (*Biff comes slowly toward her*.) We’re free... We’re free... (*Biff lifts her to her feet and moves out up right with her in his arms. Linda sobs quietly. Bernard and Charley come together and follow them, followed by Happy. Only the music of the flute is left on the darkening stage as over the house the hard towers of the apartment buildings rise into sharp focus, and the curtain falls.*)